

# Joint Messages of Local and Sub-national Governments

Cities, metropolises, regions and their association contributing to Rio+20

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Presented to the UN Secretary General  
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**23 April 2012**

## Good urban development is the key to sustainable development

Urbanization is a driver for economic world growth and development. It is in the cities around the world that the pressures of globalization, migration, social inequality, environmental pollution and climate change and youth unemployment are most directly felt. On the other hand they have for centuries been cradle of innovation and they produce currently above 75 % of the worlds of GDP. We should strive to achieve cities that are environmentally sustainable, socially responsible and economically productive.

Local and sub-national authorities would like to transmit a sense of urgency: the need to act is now, this calls for concrete actions and measurable commitments and results.

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UCLG Sections  
Africa



Asia-Pacific



Eum-Asia



Europe



Latin America



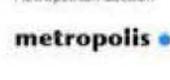
Middle East-West Asia



North America



Metropolitan Section



**In consideration of the above, local and sub-national authorities put forward the following recommendations:**

**RECOMMENDATION 1: A new multi-level governance architecture is needed**

We commit to promoting effective partnerships in building sustainable cities, integrating all relevant partners into plans of action for sustainable urban development at all levels. We should intensify exchange of experiences and examples from cities, possibly through an e-platform and a global partnership for sustainable cities, involving multi-stakeholder participation – cities and local governments, civil society, national governments and the private sector.

We emphasize the importance of citizen participation and the ability of the local community to involve the many actors including citizens and groups, civil society and the private sector.

As governmental stakeholders, we call on member-states to take into account the specific perspective of local and sub-national governments deriving from their proximity to citizens in international governance and to take them into account in any future institutional frameworks for the Sustainable Development Agenda. This is crucial to sustainability and to the implementation of good governance mechanisms, based on transparency, participation, equity and accountability.

**RECOMMENDATION 2: Sustainable Cities should be a crosscutting issue in the Sustainable Development Agenda. Potential Sustainable Development Goals should include at least one Goal on “Sustainable Cities for All” and make reference to:**

- A) **Access to quality basic services.** This is a fundamental responsibility of local and sub-national governments; they should be empowered with adequate human and financial resources: unfunded mandates should be avoided.

To improve living conditions in cities, we also need to upgrade basic services such as health, nutrition, safe potable water, sanitation, and waste management. City leaders should protect and sustain our natural and built environments, and foster the development of sustainable and efficient infrastructure through the promotion of sustainable building regulations [codes] and incentives, as well as the development of sustainable transport, infrastructure solutions and renewable energy infrastructure that enables access to sustainable energy for all. An integrated approach to infrastructure planning and provision should be maintained in the urban development process.

- B) **Social inclusion and equity.** This includes gender equality, and the needs of children and youth, and should be guaranteed through strong and accountable local governments. Only by investing on human capital and ensuring a more equitable distribution of wealth in particular to reduce national disparities, will it be possible to achieve a sustainable eradication of poverty and a territory balance of the development process.
- C) **Environment.** This implies recognizing a legal status for global public goods. The adaptation to climate change, a disaster risk reduction and a resilience planning are key issues that should receive increased attention and resources. We see a need for comprehensive risk management strategies that would ensure greater resilience to natural disasters due to geologic instability, weather and climate change impacts that can severely hit cities.

**RECOMMENDATION 3: Cohesion among territories in development policies should be fostered**

As sustainability challenges and responsibilities go beyond political borders, consultation mechanisms, solidarity among territories and integrated governance frameworks should be promoted in the outcomes of Rio+20.

Strengthened structural capacities of territories and investments in infrastructures are crucial to poverty eradication.

National Urban policies designed in full cooperation with sub-national authorities should enable them to address sustainable urbanisation.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 4: Culture should be acknowledged as an important dimension of sustainable development**

We urge local authorities to use culture as a force for urban regeneration and social inclusion, by encouraging heritage preservation, fostering creative industries, and recognizing the value-added of cultural diversity.

We encourage the adoption of information and communication technologies in order to foster smart, connected cities that provide access to the knowledge economy, enhance public services through e-government websites.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 5: Development of legal mechanisms for local and sub-national governments**

Sound rules are needed for local and sub-national authorities to set up good governance and management systems which will allow them for instance a) to develop modern municipal solid waste management systems that emphasize the 3Rs – reduce, reuse, recycle b) to enable urban land registration and land use planning v) to optimize urban management through improved monitoring and intervention.

We commit to implement land policy development and regulatory and procedural reform programmes, if necessary, so as to achieve sustainable urban development and to better manage climate change impacts, ensuring that land interventions are anchored within effective land governance frameworks. In this context, the link between rural and urban societies is of importance. The argument has been made that appropriate rural policies might be important for the management of the urbanization process.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 6: Development of financial mechanisms for local and sub-national governments**

We call for increased investments in urban infrastructure and call on national and international financial institutions to develop innovative financing mechanisms to enable improved service delivery including, among others: i) sustainable transport options and services management, particularly mass transit and non-motorized transport; ii) water supply networks and waste water treatment facilities;

#### **RECOMMENDATION 7: Local and sub-national governments as hubs of green growth**

A structurally and qualitatively different type of economic growth is needed. Incentives should direct growth towards more resource-productive, resilient, low-carbon and low risk urban infrastructure, and renewed urban design. A global Green Economy needs to comprise inclusive Green Urban Economies, and empower Local and sub-national Governments.

#### **RECOMMENDATION 8: The Rio+20 Conference should be considered as the first step towards Habitat III which focus will be on the global commitment to reinvigorate the urban agenda**

We commit to develop national urban policies, defined in full cooperation with local and sub-national authorities, integrating efforts across spheres of governments to support a holistic, integrated and multilevel governance approach to urban design and development that empowers local and sub-national governments, paying special attention to the unique and critical challenges of metropolitan areas.

We call upon all states to prioritize sustainable urban development through increased investment in and attention to urban design, urban legislation, economy and governance.