

Local and Regional Governments towards Rio+20

**United Cities
and Local Governments**



LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS TOWARDS RIO+20

The first Earth Summit in 1992 achieved wide consensus and was considered a major step forward in the understanding of environmental issues and their broader impact.

It also proved the growing awareness of the non-state actors, by the formal recognition of stakeholders through Major Groups among which local authorities in chapter 28.

In twenty years the challenges faced by the world have changed and a new dimension should be added to the classical three pillars of sustainable development. Policies for development cannot solely be based on economic growth, social inclusion and environmental balance. Today, this triangle is not sufficient. Cultural diversity has become one of the crucial elements of globalization. Fostering intercultural dialogue and promoting cultural diversity are some of humankind's greatest challenges: culture should become the fourth pillar of development.

KEY MESSAGES ON A RENEWED GLOBAL GOVERNANCE SYSTEM FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

International and national strategies for sustainable development should take into account the local realities and trends with the active assistance of local governments. A new governance framework for sustainability should include the local and regional authorities as full-fledged partner in the decision making bodies.

In view of the Rio+20 Conference, Local and regional authorities are raising concrete requests before the international community, which key headings can be summarised as follow:

- 1. Proceed to a serious, profound, in-depth analysis on the foundations of sustainable development in the light of the changes in the world during the last 20 years. This would entail updating the notion of development and including a fourth pillar of culture.**
- 2. The outcome document from Rio+20 Summit should include a specific chapter devoted to local and regional authorities and a renewed Agenda 21, taking into account the era of urbanization the world has entered.** The special perspective of local and regional governments' deriving from their proximity to the citizens is instrumental for the success of sustainability and for the implementation of good governance mechanisms, based on transparency, participation and accountability. National strategies for sustainable development should take into account the local realities and trends with the active assistance of local governments. There is a necessity to go beyond the clusters and sectoral approaches.
- 3. An agreement on a renewed global governance system for Sustainable Development** which would go beyond the environment pillar. Environmental governance has to be strengthened and better coordinated by a strong structure that would ensure implementation of the existing international environmental agreements, through a multi-stakeholders' mechanism following ILO example, by a reinforced organization. However, sustainable development has to be implemented in a transversal way that would involve looking at
- 4. Sustainable development goals,** elaborated jointly with stakeholders. The sustainable development goals should not be limited to environmental goals and would be closely linked with the Millennium Development Goals. Alternatively a "**green roadmap**" could define the concrete steps to undertake in order to achieve a sustainable society. This green roadmap should be the tool ensuring implementation of the sustainable agenda for the next 20 years in the new institutional framework for sustainable development. This roadmap has to be elaborated and implemented with the full partnership of major groups' representatives.
- 5. International decentralized cooperation** should also be strengthened as one of the essential tool for cooperation and development. The local root of actions, sustained in a limited territorial dimension not only guarantees a local appropriation and a greater sustainability to actions, but it also provides them with a more democratic base as well. Although there are important differences in the way these problems are faced, the options to fulfill the demands of the citizenship are often very similar and constitute a solid base for horizontal cooperation and for the exchange of experiences.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS CONCERNS

Half of the world population is now living in cities. In this urban era, “sustainable urbanization” and “sustainable consumption” are part of the new challenges identified by the UN Secretary Ban Ki Moon in the Rio+20 processes. Sustainable development, in particular in urban areas, cannot be envisaged without the fulfillment of Human rights in the city, the recognition of culture as a key component of sustainable development, access for all to basic services, as well as sustainable urban planning. Cities will have to be inclusive, creative, better planned and organized, with capacities to reduce and manage wastes, reduce carbon footprint, increase renewable energies use and as such contribute to a more cost-efficient and rationalized use of natural resources.

MAIN CONTRIBUTIONS FROM UCLG MEMBERS

1. CULTURE AS FOURTH PILLAR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Local and regional authorities' proposals for the Rio+20 outcomes:

- Recognize **culture as the fourth pillar of sustainable development** to reinforce the integration between the three existing pillars, and add coherence to the paradigm of sustainability. (See policy paper adopted In November 2010 by the World Congress in Mexico).
- Support **the Agenda 21 for culture**, signed and implemented by almost 450 cities and local governments in the five continents, in partnerships with international organizations, national governments and civil society.
- Recognise **Culture is contributing to a green society**, in particular through preservation of natural and historical heritage, promotion of creativity, cultural industry and tourism.
- Acknowledge the **role Culture has to play in public policies** of the developing countries and particularly in its relations with other issues such as environment, education, social cohesion, identity and international cooperation between nations.

2. TAKING FORWARD THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

Local and regional authorities' proposals for the Rio+20 outcomes:

- The **Global Charter-Agenda for Human Rights in the City** should be supported and upscaled as part of national action plans and strategies: this tool conceived by local authorities, with the support of the academia and civil society, provides a rights-based approach and a specific action plan to local authorities aiming to strengthen the social aspect of sustainable development.
- Strengthen the social pillar of Sustainable development, in particular in urban areas, by **ensuring social sustainability**, thus facing issues such as poverty, precarious employment, spatial segregation, insufficient provision of basic services, discrimination and educational deficit.

3. ACCESS TO BASIC SERVICES

Local and regional authorities' proposals for the Rio+20 outcomes:

- Recognise **cities and local authorities as a pivotal sphere of government for the development and implementation of basic services** which will lead to poverty alleviation based on their strong convening power and the potential of local and regional authorities to develop key partnership with the civil society and private sector.
- Implement an effective decentralization of responsibilities, policy management, decision-making authority and sufficient resources, including revenue collection authority, following the **“International guidelines on decentralization and access to basic services for all”** adopted by UN Habitat.
- Give a special focus to **access to water, recognized as an international human right by a resolution of the General Assembly (A/RES/64/292)** in July 2010, calling on States and international organizations to provide financial resources, build capacity and transfer technology, particularly to developing countries, in scaling up efforts to provide safe, clean, accessible and affordable drinking water and sanitation for all.
- **Adopt access to water as a sustainable development goal**, building on the MDGs, and further taking into account the essential role of local governments to reach it.

4. DISASTER RISK REDUCTION

Local and regional authorities' proposals for the Rio+20 outcomes:

- Territories at all level should rely on principles and recommendations of the **Hyogo framework**, adopted in 2005 and signed by 168 countries to implement disaster risk reduction strategies, such as prevention and mitigation plans.
- Local governments should benefit from capacity building to help them integrate **disaster management** in their developing strategy in order to protect their population and ensure them of healthy lands, secured land tenure and reliable infrastructures and services.

- **Disaster risk reduction strategies** have to be integrated in sustainable urban planning in order to minimize over costs, such as those caused by urbanization of land exposed to risks.

5. SUSTAINABLE URBAN PLANNING

Local and regional authorities' proposals for the Rio+20 outcomes:

- Acknowledge Metropolises around the world have developed into true development motors in their respective countries.
- Address the need for sustainable policies to be based on well planned and well governed cities, facilitating partnership with all stakeholders for the provision of services, especially transport, water, energy and housing but also health or social services.
- Need to anticipate and address the increase of slum dwellers and informal settlements not only as a challenge but also as opportunities.
- Support the **concept of the city of proximity**. Referring to the key competencies of local governments for spatial planning and urban development, this concept reinforces the compact and inclusive city, allowing for self sustaining territorial units with a distinct identity, and should enable citizens to undertake their activities in their own neighborhoods. Public space will fill more social functions and the concept of mobility will change as travel distances are reduced. This type of strategy would include such areas as broad band access (IT), new modes of communication, new work structures, revision of public services' grids (schools, sports), increase of energy saving concepts such as public transport, electric cars and bicycles, walkable cities as well as new food supply chain and urban agriculture.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE GREEN ECONOMY DEBATE

Local and regional authorities' proposals for the Rio+20 outcomes:

- Looking at the global economic and financial crisis, we should talk about green society rather than "green economy": economy should not be at the centre of sustainability, but human-beings taking into account their diversity, cultural specificities and plurality of knowledge systems.
- The way towards a green society should recognize, value and protect common goods and goods of general interests such as water resources, energy resources, the atmosphere, biodiversity, forests ...
- A green society should take into account: payment for environmental services, protection of the environment and of the populations, decent working conditions for employees and respect of economic, social and cultural rights." The issue of "payment for environmental services" although not unknown to the UN system is still a newcomer to its regulations and texts. It is very important to value and to finance benefits that are provided by ecosystems services such as freshwater provision, forests' climate regulations and others to maintain the balance on earth.
- Cities already act with The Global Cities Covenant on Climate - "The Mexico City Pact"- a voluntary initiative that aims to advance local climate actions: including the reduction of emissions, adaptation to the impacts of climate change and fostering city-to-city cooperation.
- The transition towards a green economy has to take into account the principle already known and recognized of « shared but differentiated responsibility », as developed and developing countries, will not be able to evolve towards such an economy at the same speed, an issue that can even be encountered between regions of a same country. It also has to take into consideration the sometimes wide differences between the population of a same Nation: a sustainable society cannot be achieved without fighting against poverty and in particular without reducing inequalities.
- Local governments are the best places to identify population's needs and should receive full support of national government and be included in international mechanisms that will create opportunities and supportive systems to enable least developed countries to progressively enter a green economy (technology transfer, financial aid, trainings...).

United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is the biggest organization of local and regional governments in the world, present in 140 countries in the world. UCLG represents and defends the interests of local governments on the world stage, regardless of the size of the communities they serve. UCLG's mission is to be the united voice and world advocate of democratic local self-government, promoting its values, objectives and interests, through cooperation between local governments, and within the wider international community.