



GLOBAL TASKFORCE

OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

FOR POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

TOWARDS HABITAT III

Global Taskforce: Initial Recommendations HABITAT III PrepCom I, September 2014

Local and Regional Government organizations, in their capacity as governmental stakeholders and gathered as part of the Global Taskforce for Post-2015 Development Agenda and towards Habitat III, are committed to undertaking their full responsibility and assuming their role as key partners in the definition and implementation of the Habitat Agenda, ensuring its linkages to the Post-2015 Development Agenda and its localization; in this way contributing to managing urbanization so it is accompanied by better living conditions and sustainable development.

This paper highlights some of the key areas that will need to be developed further during the Habitat III preparation process towards the Conference in 2016.

Territorial governments: key partners for Habitat and the Post-2015 Agenda

During the preparation and outcomes of Habitat II, local governments were recognized as a key partner of UN-Habitat in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. Habitat II was also an important step forward in recognizing the relevance of the networks of local authorities and contributing towards greater collaboration among them. The Rio+20 outcome document acknowledged the state of governmental stakeholders to local governments and signaled the relevance of their strong involvement in the Sustainability Agenda. Likewise, the ongoing post-2015 process, notably the recommendations of the HLP and the Open Working Group, as well as key international policy positions (from the Commonwealth, SIDS and Communications of the European Union), have highlighted the important role of Local and Regional Governments, in particular that of cities, in sustainable development.

Presently, the members of the Global Taskforce confirm their belief that a new, broad partnership must be erected, based on a common understanding of our shared humanity, mutual respect and mutual benefit. Mindful of the challenges that many parts of the world are facing with increased violence, in particular in the Middle East, we would like to call for far-reaching agreements based on universal commitments.

Transformative potential of urbanization

Habitat III will take place at a time when the transformative potential of urbanization is being broadly acknowledged. This is also a time when we face unprecedented global challenges such as migration shifts and consumption patterns, which will need to be tackled at territorial level. The Habitat III process leading up to the Conference should be an opportunity to strengthen existing partnerships and explore mechanisms that will enhance the participation of all actors, in particular Local and Regional Governments, in the policy and decision-making mechanisms that will lead to the Habitat III and Sustainable Development Agendas.

Local and Regional Governments and their associations emphasize the need to draw a clear picture of the results, achievements and unfinished issues of the Habitat II Agenda, paying particular attention to the implementation of decentralization processes around the world, the state of access to basic services, the financing of sub-national authorities and infrastructures, and the development of territorial cohesion.

Habitat III fundamental to the implementation of the Sustainability Agenda

The Habitat III outcomes need to be closely intertwined with the Post-2015 Agenda, as they will generate the basis for its localization and implementation on the ground. Considering that Habitat III will be the first conference taking place after the UN Summit on the Post-2015 Agenda Resolutions, the members of the Global Taskforce would like to stress the need to pay special attention to the means of implementation of specific targets and indicators for cities and human settlements. Local and regional authorities would like to further focus on the localization of the Post-2015 Development Agenda, so that they have the capacities to achieve the goals that relate directly to the responsibility of the local level.

Acknowledging that Local and Regional Governments are not the only actors, it will be vital to ensure the full involvement of this constituency to foster the political will and innovation necessary to face common challenges and achieve the type of progress that leaves no one behind.

The full involvement of local and regional authorities as policy developers and not simply implementers will enable the creation of an inclusive Habitat III Agenda as well as the achievement of urban sustainable development in the future.

As inheritors of the First Assembly of Local Authorities organized in Istanbul during Habitat II, local and regional leaders and their networks see the organization of the representation of local and regional authorities at the Conference, and their contribution to defining the key recommendations, as an important mandate.

Key Policy Areas

Territorial cohesion

Local and Regional Governments and their associations would like to emphasize the need for a territorial approach as being crucial to the New Urban Agenda, and stress how urbanization can contribute to national development. The territorial focus should take into account the rural-urban continuum as well as the important role of peripheral areas, intermediary cities and intermediary levels of governments. Local and Regional Governments will promote efficient and inclusive land-use planning as a mainspring for implementing sustainable urbanization.

Local and multi-level governance

Managing a rapidly urbanizing world will necessitate reinforcing local governance and improving collaboration between the different levels of government (national, regional, local). The promotion of public space policies, strategic urban and regional planning, and acknowledging the opportunities and challenges of metropolization and cohesion among territories will be instrumental. A clear division of responsibilities between the different levels of governance based on self-government and the principle of subsidiarity will be of great importance to achieving a sound agenda.

In this respect, local data production and mining, as well as access to local statistics and the definition of dedicated indicators, will be key to inducing the evaluation, monitoring and efficiency of development policies and fostering innovation.

Citizens at the center of governance

Strengthening mechanisms to enable the genuine participation of the population in the co-production of public services and urban planning, the evaluation of public policies and decision-making, and in ensuring the accountability of governments at all levels and including e-solutions, will be essential. Increased accountability and innovative formats of governance will be a fundamental change that should be factored into the outcome of Habitat III. The members of the Global Taskforce call for a Habitat III Agenda that is based on equality and accountability from the bottom up.

Culture as a driver and enabler of sustainable development

Sustainable urban development needs to explicitly acknowledge the role of culture. A people-centered society needs to promote heritage, creativity, diversity and the transmission of knowledge. There is no future without culture: cities need vitality, meaning, identity and innovation, and citizens need to widen their freedoms. This is why members of the Global Taskforce call for a Habitat III Agenda that makes culture an operational dimension of sustainable urban development.

Innovation and local economic and social development

The agenda will need to support the efforts of cities to develop an enabling environment for economic development, promoting local enterprises and cooperatives as engines of growth, as well as corporate social responsibilities, decent and inclusive job opportunities, and connecting local initiatives with markets at the local, national and international scale. Further, it should foster resilience, solidarity, innovation, culture and build creative solutions, including social economic strategies and mechanisms based on solidarity – with a multiplier effect across the nation. This is particularly the case when social cohesion is threatened by excessive income and wealth concentration and growing urban inequalities, as reflected in the lack of affordable housing and gated communities with inadequate access to basic services and infrastructure.

Furthermore, Local and Regional Governments will need to see their capacities strengthened to be able to better integrate the informal sector's contribution to local development, define and implement local economic policies and design strategies to support local initiatives, especially those tackling income inequalities, support local policies, mobilize adequate and diversified resources, and create economic development structures, programmes and services involving community partners.

Addressing climate change and promoting resilience

Climate change and disaster risk. We must move away from the connection between development and higher living standards and increased fossil fuel use and environmental degradation, and build resilience in each urban center to address the direct and indirect impacts of climate change. Local governments are committed promoting sustainable development that is mindful of the earth's capacity to sustain life.

Adequate financing at territorial Level

There is widespread under-investment in basic services and infrastructures in urban and rural areas and an increasing gap between the responsibilities transferred to local governments and their revenues. National and local governments need to join forces to mobilize domestic resources, create an enabling environment for long-term investment, adopt strong regulations against fiscal evasion, foster the creditworthiness of local and regional authorities, enable the hybridization of their resources and their access to financial market, and experiment with innovative financing models and alliances. Structural reforms are needed in national and international financial systems to bridge these gaps and allow decentralization to meet expectations. The localization of resources is instrumental and must be part of financial engineering and resource managing capabilities to foster the modernization of local administrations, as well as to reduce costs and increase efficiency and accountability, implement fiscal autonomy and cooperation processes and promote a renewed official development assistance to better attend local and regional needs.

An organized constituency ready to contribute

In order to articulate the voice of local and regional authorities and their networks more strongly towards Habitat III, and to properly reflect the great changes that have taken place since 1996, members of the Global Taskforce express the will to develop an intensive consultation process among constituency members, which will culminate in the Second Assembly of Local Authorities. This will enable the development of action plans at local level.

Peer-to-peer learning and decentralized cooperation

Decentralized cooperation, peer-to-peer learning, municipal international cooperation and other similar means have been helping to enhance and build the capacity of local governments in the global south. These must evolve into a more structured and systematic approach to support counterparts from all over the world to build resilient cities, fight climate change, reduce poverty, support democracy and local governance, and provide basic service delivery to the people.

Local and regional networks gathered as part of the Global Taskforce reiterate their willingness to work with the international community towards a sustainable, fair and equitable future for all.

