

STATEMENT OF THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS CONSTITUENCY

GATHERED IN THE GLOBAL TASKFORCE

Special session of the United Nations General Assembly on COVID-19

December 3 and 4, 2020, 3pm - 3am CET

In a world facing an unprecedented crisis, we the constituency of local and regional governments have been and still are at the forefront of efforts to overcome these difficult times and ensure that people and the planet are duly protected.

The COVID-19 pandemic has acted as a magnifying glass that highlights who and what we were leaving behind and has also further brought to light the essential role local public service provision played during and beyond the outbreak and towards the achievement of the SDGs.

During these trying times, local and regional governments have acted and have proven that their needs and the needs of their communities reach far beyond their competences and resources.

Our constituency, gathered in the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments serving 2/3 of the world's population, is convinced that the universal development agendas remain more relevant than ever and act as a transformative framework to address the persistent inequalities and environmental destruction the globe is facing.

We, local and regional governments have made a clear commitment to leaving no one and no place behind; however will need to be fully acknowledged and included at the global decision-making table and recovery plans to make this a reality.

Our message before this extraordinary assembly is both a cry for help and a message of hope.

A cry to support the local service provision ecosystems.

A message of hope, since we know that we can deliver together. We have great resolve to ensure that the sacrifices made by the many that are gone forever and the sacrifices that we are asking for future generations will serve a purpose, allowing us to shape better future for all.

Strengthening universal access to public services will be key to the recovery:

Local public service provision has proven to be a key part of the world's health system and of the response to the social and economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The recovery will depend on the capacity of local and local and regional governments to ensure people access to basic service provision that underpins, health, quality of life, sustainability and equality.

Local, national and international policies will need to further invest on infrastructure, human resources and capacity building that will ensure strong local services accessible to all and in particular mindful of the most vulnerable. The income reductions that public, transport and social services have undergone while continued services are guaranteed will need to be mitigated with strong financial packages and renewed fiscal models.

As countries and international entities prepare for the COVID-19 recovery, we call to ensure and reinforce public service provision. Essential services will need to be redefined as we work towards a “care” society where solidarity is the beacon of security for all.

Strengthening local democracy and renewing the values of citizenship and new rights

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the lack of trust between our communities and our institutions. People call for new collaborative governance and subsidiarity, involving communities in the democratic process in every step of the way and enhanced co-governance among all spheres of government that foster hope and shared prosperity.

We need to empower all people equally to fulfill their potential, we need **a transition to a system driven by communities that fosters co-creation of public policies based around participation and community involvement.**

Local democracy, nourished by our diversity is critical for the future that our communities need and to ensure a world that protects the existing rights of our citizens but also fully explores a next generation of rights in the digital era and intertwined world.

Ecological transformation and renewed relation with nature:

We need to ensure the COVID recovery aiming to re-energize our economies and societies are also directly responding to the climate emergency and unsustainable trajectory the world finds itself in.

The recovery should include steps towards the implementation of a worldwide green deal where the only stimulus adopted is a green stimulus that increases the sustainability of our societies while building their resilience towards future crises.

A deal that fosters new methods of consumption and production, moving away from fossil fuels, and that engages in a solidarity driven race to zero carbon.

In this regard, **we call for a green and just recovery that acknowledges development as not solely related to growth but that respects the ecological transformation fostering a new relationship with nature,** taking into account the informal sector and based on a territorial approach.

Global solutions driven locally in a strong and more inclusive, multilateral governance system:

The COVID-19 pandemic has provided us with an unprecedented window of opportunity to rethink the way we go about global policies and decisions. It has underlined the direct co-relation between local realities and global challenges.

Local and regional governments need to ensure that communities are put at the centre of debates when deciding on measures that will determine the future of our planet and the model we will build development around.

Local and regional governments want to shape a multilateral system that places a greater emphasis on the commons and role that public service provision needs to play in development to achieve the global goals.

We call for a renewed, more inclusive, multilateral system based on ownership, co-creation, and partnership mechanisms including all actors. A system in which local and regional governments are fully engaged by holding a permanent seat at the decision-making tables representing the peoples they serve.

We reiterate that the commitments and efforts of our organized constituency of local and regional governments are indispensable and integral to the transformation we need.

We call for equality driven universal basic services and health care powered by a green and sustainable vision and driven by accountable inclusive institutions at all levels to be at the top of the agenda of the Decade of Action which is now the opportunity for transformation. You can count on our constituency to make this a reality. Failure is not an option and the time to act is now.