“Most critical objectives and challenges of the Post-2015 Development Agenda will certainly depend on local action, community buy-in and local leadership, well-coordinated at and with all levels of governance... Accountable local governments can promote strong local partnerships with all local stakeholders – civil society, private sector, etc. –. Integrated and inclusive local development planning that involves all stakeholders is a key instrument to promoting ownership and the integration of the three dimensions of development – social, economic and environment –.”

The present report is based on the dialogue process run through 2014 with the purpose of responding to the following questions:

How will the Post-2015 Development Agenda be implemented at the local level? What local governance processes, tools, institutions, mechanisms, and other means of implementation are needed to achieve the future SDGs? How can the voices of local stakeholders be amplified and their inclusion in the intergovernmental processes be supported?

The contents and recommendations of this report do not necessarily reflect the views and positions of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations, or the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments. They are the outcomes of an extensive dialogue process with key governance stakeholders and constituencies, which took place from June 2014 to October 2014.

Report drafted by Agustí Fernández de Losada
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1- Background: The Post-2015 Development Agenda

Since 2012, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) has been spearheading an unprecedented, multi-stakeholder outreach to facilitate a global conversation on the future development agenda that is to become the successor framework to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) beyond 2015. The process has involved a large number of people, including policymakers, academics, experts, business people and interested citizens. While the first phase of the dialogue process during 2012-2013 focused on potential issues and areas to be included in the agenda, the second phase concentrated on the means of implementation with dialogues organized around six main areas of discussion:

i) Localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda;
ii) Helping to strengthen capacities and institutions;
iii) Participatory monitoring, existing and new forms of accountability;
iv) Partnerships with civil society and other actors;
v) Partnerships with the private sector; and
vi) Culture and development.

The need to discuss the “what” but also the “how” to ensure the effective implementation of the future SDGs was strongly emphasized in the thematic and national dialogues that made up the first stage of the Post-2015 dialogues, as well as in the HLP\(^1\) and other reports. In this context, one of the key issues raised was the need to discuss how to “localize” the future development framework, assessing the local impact of the future SDGs and ensuring the local dimension of development.

This “localization” tries to go beyond national or regional implementation to understand how the future global development agenda will be implemented locally, as well as the implications for the local level. In contrast to the “localizing the MDGs process”, which was initiated in 2005 only after the MDGs were decided, the current effort aims to consider the issue of local implementation alongside the definition and negotiation of the SDGs.

The term “localization” refers to the process of defining, implementing and monitoring strategies at the local level for achieving global, national and subnational sustainable development goals and targets. This involves various concrete mechanisms, tools, innovations, platforms and processes to effectively translate the development agenda into results at the local level. The concept should thus be read in a holistic way and be understood beyond the institutions of local governments\(^2\) to include all local actors in a community; including civil society, traditional leaders, religious organisations, academia, the private sector and others. We firmly believe, however, that a strong and capable local government provides the fundamental leadership role in bringing together local stakeholders.

Localization is thus an important element of effective multi-level governance. Localization also provides the means to establish the relevance of the Post-2015 global discussions to the local population.

\(^1\) The Secretary-General’s High-Level Panel of eminent persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda

\(^2\) For the purposes of the present document Local Governments refers to the all the different formats of governments at subnational level.
Over the last decade, the development agenda has been broadened with the emergence of a wide range of global challenges. At the same time, it has seen growing demand for improved access to global public goods and called for innovative institutional arrangements and solutions. It is evident that the local dimension of development is increasingly intertwined with global and national issues. The role of cities in development will grow; as 60% of the world population will live in cities by 2030. Nowadays, issues such as peace, human security, health, employment, climate change, and migration are mainly addressed at the national and international level, but long-term solutions often require attention to local dimensions, implications and nuances, and most solutions will require local planning, local participation as well as local governance.

Lessons learned from the pursuit of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) revealed the key role of local governments in defining and delivering the MDGs, and in communicating them to citizens. A good proof of this has been the multiplication of decentralized development cooperation initiatives and the use of city-to-city cooperation as a cost-effective mechanism for implementation.

In February 2014, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), on behalf of UNDG, together with the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments for the Post-2015 Development Agenda towards HABITAT III (Global Task Force - GTF), were appointed to lead the dialogue on the means of implementation of the Post-2015 agenda at the local level. The process was implemented jointly with national governments as well as with local government and their associations, citizens and communities. The results of the dialogue have provided a valuable contribution from the local level, voicing local issues at national and international levels.

The main objective of the dialogue has been to identify and propose ways of implementing the new development agenda successfully. The results of the national and local dialogues have also informed various regional and international events, policy discussions and have been presented to key decision-makers of the Post-2015 framework.

1.1 Objectives of the dialogue process

The aim of this inclusive Dialogue was to:

- Come up with clear recommendations from local/territorial, national, regional, and global stakeholders about how to implement the new agenda at the local level;
- To amplify the voices of local stakeholders (local governments, CSOs, academia, the private sector and others), with special attention to the poor and other traditionally excluded groups, complementing the formal intergovernmental negotiation process;
- To support the overall international negotiation by highlighting the aspirations emanating from the local constituency.

The localization dialogue was specifically designed with the aim of:

i. Identifying key local/territorial stakeholders for the implementation of the Post-2015 framework;
ii. Analysing and defining roles and functions of local governments and stakeholders for working towards the targets;
iii. Defining mechanisms and processes for facilitating the implementation process;
iv. Identifying capacity gaps of relevant local stakeholders;
v. Analysing participation and inclusiveness for the implementation process including local accountability mechanisms to populations;  
vi. Identifying simple but effective monitoring and reporting systems including identifying data sources, gaps and means of replenishing;  
vii. Discussing the implementation of the principles of development cooperation effectiveness at the local level;  
viii. Linking the process-related discussions to the thematic areas currently agreed by the Open Working Group;  
ix. Territorial solidarity and the impact of the rural-urban solidarity in sustainability;  
and  
x. Addressing the consequences that increasing urbanization has for sustainability.

The dialogues aimed to be open and inclusive, providing national and local governments and other local stakeholders with a platform to formulate ideas about how to implement the post-2015 agenda in their own words.

2- The Dialogue on “Localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda”

2.1. Governance of the process

Co-led by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), on behalf of UNDG, and together with the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments for the Post-2015 Development Agenda towards HABITAT III, the Post-2015 Secretariat for the Dialogues on the Localization has been working together with national and local governments (and their associations), key territorial stakeholders and other international organisations to conduct local, national, regional and global and on-line events. The Secretariat has supported the United Nations Country Teams in the organisation of national dialogues, ensuring visibility and dissemination of the messages from national, regional and global levels.

An Advisory Committee was set up to provide guidance and to determine the most effective way for the results to be fed in the Post-2015 discussions. The Advisory Committee was made of 11 representatives, including: Member States (the Governments of Italy and Ghana), multilateral organizations (the European Commission), local governments (UCLG–Asia Pacific and the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities - APLA), global civil society networks (Slum Dwellers International, the Huairou Commission, and the World Conference of Youth), the private sector (UN Global Compact), foundations (the European Foundation Centre) and academia (Unión de Universidades de América Latina y el Caribe – UDUAL).

The establishment of this Advisory Committee represents one of the process’ achievements, constituting an innovative platform that brings together a wide and diverse range of public and private institutions including representatives of youth and women.

Ecuador, Ghana and Italy are Co-hosting the dialogue, and have been actively involved in planning, outreach and the dissemination of the dialogue results among Member States. They have also provided recommendations that will feed into the final international agenda.
2.2 Dialogues

The dialogue has taken place in a number of different stages to ensure engagement of a greater number of citizens, stakeholders and governments as possible. Based on a strong partnership between the UN, national and local governments and other key stakeholders; public and private, the dialogues have taken place at national, regional and global levels.

2.2.1 Discussion

National dialogues

National dialogues took place in 13 different countries: in Africa (Burundi, Cameroon, Ghana, Malawi and Tanzania), Asia Pacific (Armenia, Philippines, Tajikistan and Vanuatu), Europe (Portugal) and Latin America and the Caribbean (Ecuador, El Salvador and Jamaica).

Conceived to be universal, the Post-2015 Development Agenda should be applicable to all countries and regions. The “Localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda” dialogue has aimed to achieve a balanced regional coverage, holding dialogues in most of the world’s regions; in Africa, Asia & Pacific, Europe and Latin America & the Caribbean.

The dialogues have been organised in different socio-political contexts; from highly populated countries such as the Philippines (97 million inhabitants) to medium sized countries like Tanzania (47 million), Ghana (29 million) and Ecuador (16 million), to smaller states such as El Salvador (7 million) and Tajikistan (8.2 million) and small island developing states like Jamaica (2.7 million) and Vanuatu (215,000 inhabitants). Attention was also paid to ensure the dialogue is organized in low, mid and high-income economies.
In most of the countries involved, the dialogue consisted of both local and national dialogues.

**Local dialogues** were conceived to strongly involve territorial stakeholders. Participants were asked to identify priority areas for the Post-2015 Development Agenda in light of their political, economic and social contexts, as well as to identify opportunities and constraints to future implementation.

*Dialogues were an excellent opportunity to engage local governments and stakeholders in a multilevel and multi-stakeholder discussion involving international organisations and national governments representatives*

The local dialogues were also held in a wide range of territories: provinces such as Azuay in Ecuador or Eastern Samar in Philippines; metropolitan areas such as Quito in Ecuador, Lisbon in Portugal, Manila in Philippines, Yaoundé in Cameroon, San Salvador in El Salvador, Dusambé in Tajikistan and Accra in Ghana; urban and peri-urban areas such as Bafoussam and Buea in Cameroon, Évora in Portugal and Kumasi in Ghana; rural areas such as Wa and Ekumfi Districts in Ghana and Karonga, Dedza and Nsanje districts in Malawi; and islands such as Zanzibar (Tanzania), Vanuatu and Madeira in Portugal.

Several of the countries involved decided to organise specific workshops in the premises of Universities, as was the case of the University of El Salvador and the University of Coimbra in Portugal. Others were held at national civil society organisations, as in the case of the Philippines and the Economic and Social Research Foundation (ESRF) in Tanzania, or at national local government associations, as in the case of The League of Cities of the Philippines and COMURES in El Salvador.

**National dialogues** were also held to allow a wider discussion on the entire localization process and its impacts on the domestic reality with the participation of representatives of international organisations, central governments, national associations of local governments, civil society organisations, private sector institutions and academia.
In some countries, dialogues were complemented by focus group discussions (FGD), interviews with key stakeholders, queries, e-discussions, debates on social networks (Facebook and Twitter) and radio and TV campaigns, to ensure a broader outreach of the process. Tanzania, for example, organised an e-discussion via TAKNET where more than 321 participants, inside and outside the country, provided their views and ideas. In Portugal, the Public Radio Broadcasting Company – RDP Antena 1 – dedicated one edition of one of its most popular programmes “Antena Aberta”, to the debate. It was listened to by more than 100,000 people. Online social networks, especially Facebook and Twitter, were also employed in Cameroon and Portugal, and countries such as Vanuatu facilitated broad TV and print coverage of the dialogues.

The following table shows the level and diversity of the participation in the dialogues:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dialogues</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Minorities</th>
<th>Youth</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Academia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CSO</td>
<td>Comp.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Armenia</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameroon</td>
<td>1N/4T/E/P</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecuador</td>
<td>1N/6T</td>
<td>443</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>2N/6T</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>2N/3T</td>
<td>548</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jamaica</td>
<td>1N/11T</td>
<td>141</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>3T</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>3N/4T</td>
<td>274</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Portugal</td>
<td>1N/6T/E/M</td>
<td>433</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tajikistan</td>
<td>1N/E</td>
<td>1050</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tanzania</td>
<td>2N/2T/E</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanuatu</td>
<td>1N/17T/O</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>84%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The figures in many countries are still incomplete, a qualitative analysis of the participation shows some important features. An obvious observation is the significant but unequal participation of women. As stressed by UN Women, women’s empowerment can have a catalytic effect on development. Women’s participation therefore is crucial to express their concerns, needs and views on territorial development strategies. The same is true for minorities, disabled people, young people, as well as traditional and religious leaders, who had an important representation in the dialogues.

It is also worth noting the balanced participation of public and private institutions. International organisations, central governments and local and regional governments were
deeply involved in the process. Civil society institutions, the private sector, the media and academia also participated in the dialogues, providing views that will prove very helpful to contextualise the implementation of SDGs at the local level.

As stressed in the different dialogues, one of the major questions identified during the implementation of the MDGs at local level was how little was known about the goals by citizens and other stakeholders, including local and regional governments. Citizens’ ownership of the Agenda and full commitment to it will be crucial for its effectiveness. Significant efforts should be undertaken to communicate and advocate for the SDGs at local level as well as facilitating effective participation.

In Portugal, participants identified none involvement of the local communities in the dialogues as one of the shortcomings of the MDG framework. In Ecuador, participants focused on the need to communicate the Post-2015 Development Agenda more effectively. They also discussed the need to mainstream the SDGs into national, provincial and municipal development strategies. This should also include monitoring their implementation at local level and the active effective participation of all stakeholders, including people with disabilities and minority groups. In Ghana, special emphasis was made on the need to obtain the required support, communication and awareness-creation, and raising campaigns at the local level.

The critical role of Local and Regional Governments in development was underlined as one of the consensus of the entire dialogue

Ecuador, in its dialogue, stressed that there is a strong linkage between development and the existence of an appropriate legal framework with a clear assignment of responsibilities among the levels of government on the basis of distinct comparative advantage of each level. Ecuador is committed to decentralisation and the 2008 national Constitution launched an ambitious process to transfer competences and resources to empower the “autonomous decentralised governments” (GAD) as means to foster development.

Effective decentralisation and subsidiarity, therefore, form the basis of development in almost all the countries consulted. However, the devolution of power should be accompanied with appropriate environment that allows local and regional governments to fulfil their responsibilities. While both fiscal and political decentralisation programmes are necessary to allow local governments to carry out their responsibilities in the delivery of basic services and the promotion of economic, social and territorial cohesion, their capacities should also be reinforced through appropriate legal frameworks, financial mechanisms and sufficient material resources and technical capacities.

Participants in Tanzania stressed further the need to strengthen LRG’s institutional and operational capacities to address the daunting challenges they will potentially encounter in implementing the SDGs. In Philippines, Malawi and El Salvador, among other countries, participants focused on the need to improve planning mechanisms and resource allocation systems to guarantee balanced and efficient development at local and national level. In Ghana they reinforced the need to create enabling environment for local governments provide the necessary leadership to lead local stakeholders in fostering development endeavours.

The role of traditional institutions and leaders was also highlighted in different dialogues such as in Vanuatu and Ghana. They still remain a valuable resource from which
development policies can draw knowledge, legitimacy, to enhance development effectiveness.

Within this framework, coordination among the different levels of government becomes a critical challenge. In Philippines, the audience pointed out that the progress of the MDGs was by the lack of convergence among several national government agencies and insufficient participation of local governments and communities. Pursuing convergence and continued partnership at the local and national level was emphasized as a key recommendation for localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

Different types of public institutions were involved in the dialogues, including representatives of national ministries and public institutions and local governments (regions, provinces, districts, metropolitan areas and cities). In most cases, local government associations played an active role in engaging mayors and local councillors in the debate.

The participation in the dialogue process also included civil society organisations, private companies and trade unions. Representatives from the academia were also very active in the dialogues at the national and local level.

All parties concurred: local stakeholders must play an important role in the development and implementation of the SDGs. Their needs, interests and concerns must be clearly addressed in the definition of local and national development strategies. The prioritization of mechanisms for enhancing participation was considered critical in enabling people to contribute to the common development of society. In Cameroon, participants particularly emphasized the need to ensure effective participation of territorial stakeholders in the definition, implementation and monitoring of the new country’s development strategy “Vision 2035”.

The inclusion of individual and territorial stakeholders in the definition of priorities and in the allocation of funds was perceived as a veritable means to hold governments, both national and local, accountable and committed to fighting corruption and fraud. This was one of the main issues expressed by participants globally. In Tanzania, for instance, participants pointed out the need to develop appropriate policies and a strong institutional framework to fight corruption. In Philippines, participatory budgeting was highlighted as a tool to improve transparency and accountability mechanisms were called for to prevent corruption at local level.

Participants were in agreement in all the countries on the importance of strengthening transparency to allow people and stakeholders to access and manage public information to obtain a greater accountability check on governments and public managers. In addition, transparency and accountability were seen as a crucial means to enhance ownership of development policies. Local and regional governments, the closest level of government to citizens, are in a privileged position to link local stakeholders to territorial development, as was stressed in many of the dialogue platforms.

Throughout the dialogues, several substantive challenges of LRGs were identified in terms of SDG implementation. In El Salvador, participants linked most of the new development agenda to the key challenges of the country (decent work and social protection, housing and basic services, food and nutritional security, education, health, human security, environment
and resilience to climate change, migrations, etc.), and made proposals of how they could be effectively addressed.

In Ecuador, Malawi, Ghana and the Philippines, social exclusion was also identified as one of the major challenges to the implementation of the SDGs at the local level. A strong emphasis was placed on supporting the inclusion of disabled people, minorities, young people and women in development policies.

The dialogue also addressed sustainable development and resilience as a means to avoid natural disasters, protect natural resources, and preserve cultural heritage. In Tanzania and Vanuatu, participants stressed the importance of natural and cultural heritage for local development and the daunting challenges they face in their conservation.

There were also calls for more decentralised development cooperation on several platforms of the dialogue. It was approached by participants as highly adaptable to local contexts and efficient in the reinforcement of local and regional institutional and operational capacities. For example, the recent reform of the Constitution of Ecuador assigns local governments the exclusive responsibility in the field of international cooperation within the limits of their territorial boundaries. This has emerged as an interesting experience highly appreciated by participants in the dialogues. Along similar lines, participants in Malawi underlined the necessity to approach international development strategies according to the bottom up planning system established by the Local Government Act of Malawi.

In that context, the need to improve national associations of LRGs capacities has also been outlined as a relevant challenge to address. LRGs associations play a substantial role both in advocating towards the central government and international cooperation stakeholders and in providing technical assistance and training to their associated members.

To conclude, the national dialogues have been very rich and dynamic and the resulting key messages will be of a great importance to contextualise adequately the Post-2015 process and to secure a greater ownership of the forthcoming SDGs.

**Regional and global dialogues**

The dialogue was designed to address local and national situations, but also to get the necessary perspective of the possible application of the new development agenda with a regional and global dimension. As a result, the dialogue process has received great visibility; thanks to the regional and global events taken place during 2014 designed to bring together the messages from the national dialogues with inputs generated from regional and global stakeholders.

Four global dialogues were organised during this year taking advantage of key gatherings facilitated by three global stakeholders:

- ECOSOC Integration Segment on Sustainable Urbanisation, May 2014
- EU Policy Forum on Development, Lima, Peru, June 2014
- EU Policy Forum on Development, Brussels, September 2014
- UCLG Executive Bureau, Liverpool, UK, June 2014

Additionally, six regional dialogues were also were organized:

- Commonwealth Local Government Forum Board, Abuja, Nigeria, June 2014
- EU Committee of the Regions, Brussels, July 2014
- ORU/FOGAR Congress, Cartagena de Indias, September 2014
- Arab Countries meeting with the support of Platforma, in Amman, Jordan
- Caribbean dialogue on Localising SDGs, organised by the Commonwealth Local Government Forum during the Caribbean Forum of Local Government Ministers, Nassau, September 2014
- A dialogue with foundations organized by the European Foundation Center, Cariplo, Milan, Italy, September 2014

The regional and global events deliberated on several issues but reinforced many other issues which have already been identified at the local level. The necessary relationship between the multi-level challenges was clearly highlighted. LRGs face critical challenges, with many of them originating from the global level but also having local implications and impact. Rapid urbanisation requires a quick response preventing slum creation through appropriate housing and planning with provision of basic services including water, sanitation, waste and energy, safe transport and taking into consideration the importance of urban, peri-urban and rural linkages. The effects of climate change are also local, and the development of responsive resilience and environmental strategies is vital. Ending poverty requires generation of employment opportunities and decent jobs and social cohesion policies are required to avoid and prevent social exclusion.

The EC Policy Forum on Development in Lima was a great opportunity to discuss some of the territorial development challenges and the response from major regional and international cooperation actors like the European Commission. The dialogue addressed key issues such as the promotion of decentralization in a time when the EU is establishing its priorities for the next programming cycle. In this context, the proposed EU financial instruments for its 2014-2020 Multiannual Financial Framework were analysed by participants, and the need to focus on localizing development was proposed.

The UCLG Executive Bureau held in Liverpool, UK, assembled mayors and local government associations from different regions of the world. The occasion included a session to present and discuss the main outcomes of the national dialogues and to present the process ahead, including the role of local governments in the definition of the priorities of the new global development agenda (Post-2015) as well as the new urban agenda (Habitat III). UCLG presented its campaign to consolidate a stand-alone goal on urban sustainable development and to mainstream urban, local and regional concerns across other goals as a meaningful way to address effective development. One of the main challenges will be to devise and monitor of localized targets and indicators to consolidate a more contextualised SDGs system.

Among the many questions raised during the debates, emphasis was placed on the establishment of mechanisms to facilitate stronger intergovernmental coordination, allowing the full participation of all levels of government. Another issue discussed was the risk of imposing development priorities with a top-down approach. UCLG representatives expressed grave concerns about the need to establish financial mechanisms and provide deserving and sufficient resources for LRGs to carry out their responsibilities and to respond to respective responsibilities and mandates.

The ECOSOC Integration Segment on Sustainable Urbanisation took place in New York and was the occasion for a Side Event on “Localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda and Implications for the urban poor”. Attended by 50 high level participants, one of the main agreements was the need to address the terrible conditions of urban poverty and the imperative to formulate a methodology to ensure inclusion of the people at local level.
Besides the need to reinforce LRG capacities, coordination amongst local stakeholders was identified as a key element to define strategies and policies to deliver basic services and promote social cohesion.

Regional activities also took place in Europe. The Committee of the Regions of the European Union in collaboration with UNDP launched a debate among its members, counting with the additional views of mayors from El Salvador and Cameroon and of European networks as the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions, gathering more than 160 regions in Europe, and represented by the Government of the Basque Country.

The Commonwealth has also been part of the dialogue process through the dialogue during the Commonwealth Local Governments Forum (CLGF) Board meeting held in Abuja, Nigeria. The Board gathered presidents of local government associations, ministers responsible for local government, and other local government stakeholders from across the Commonwealth.

Participants at the CLGF meeting identified and elucidated some of the key challenges anticipated in implementing the SDGs at the local level. The need of a coherent governance environment to facilitate effective performance of local government in the implementation of the SDGs was considered as a key pillar asking for a clear legal framework, strong intergovernmental relationships and clarity of roles and functions. The ability to expand the stakeholder scope of local governance to include and enhance the partnerships between LRGs and other local stakeholders was commended as a necessary pursuit to facilitate the localization of SDGs. The meeting finally proposed that a dedicated funding to localize the SDGs should be established through refocusing existing and new government resources or through a dedicated global fund to support the localization of the SDGs.

Additional regional meetings took place in September, including the FOGAR meeting in Cartagena de Indias (Colombia) and the CARICOM section of CLGF meeting in Nassau (Bahamas).

E-discussions

The dialogue process also provided avenues for continuous exchange of views outside of, and in parallel with planned events. It involved the hosting of time-bound online discussions to gather views from a broad range of stakeholders and citizens on issues related to the localization of the Post-2015 Agenda. The dialogue is available on-line at www.worldwewant2015.org/localising2015.

2.2.2 Upcoming events and final report

The localization dialogue will culminate in a global meeting scheduled to be held in Turin, Italy, in October 2014, with the aim of presenting and approving the outcomes of the dialogues by representatives of the co-leading institutions on the dialogues on localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda, the advisory committee, ministers, mayors and councillors, government and multilateral officials, civil society organizations, the private sector, trade unions and from academic institutions.

The final report of the localizing dialogues will be presented to the UN Secretary-General and its recommendations will be included in his final report to the UN Assembly in November 2014.
2.2.3 Mainstreaming of the process

The localizing discussion deliberately mainstreamed the other thematic dialogues creating an integrated content for shared views and vindicated the long standing perspective that the six dialogues held in 2014 on the regarding means of implementation have been inter-linked and inter-connected

The role of local and territorial development and the importance of localizing the whole of the Post-2015 agenda has been a visible and key dimension in all of the dialogues in order to facilitate integrated and relevant development that responds to the complexity of development demands

Some of the key messages raised from these dialogues follow:

**Strengthening capacities and building effective institutions**

*Strategies, policies and solutions must be locally-derived and issue-oriented without merely transplanting best practices across countries. The country and local context is extremely important for the functioning of institutions as they are often shaped by the economic and social situation, historical baggage (i.e. colonialism), political realities and social norms and behaviours*. Solutions to problems must fit the local context.

**Partnership with private sector**

*Empowerment of micro-entrepreneurs through public-private cross-sectorial policies is necessary. Thus, the incentive role of local governments is essential.*

**Post-2015 Dialogues on Culture and Development**

*Culture-led redevelopment of urban areas and public spaces helps preserve the social fabric, attract investments and improve economic returns. Cities are increasingly faced with the challenges of diversity and inequality, and can benefit greatly from culture to improve inclusion and to promote greater social cohesion. The protection of historic districts, and cultural facilities as civic spaces for dialogue, can help reducing violence and promoting cohesion.*

**3- Main outcomes of the process**

The dialogue on “Localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda” has identified some significant outcomes.

- The localizing dialogue brought out the commonality element and contributed to the universalization of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The organization of the national dialogues held in low, middle and high-income countries facilitated the identification of common issues and challenges. The representative nature of the dialogue also ensured a balanced participation across regions of the globe and particularly low-income countries.

- The response to the dialogue process is a mark of its success. Several countries have already requested to be involved in the future implementation processes, particularly
small island developing states (SIDS) in the Pacific and the Caribbean regions, Eastern and Southern Africa as well as Eastern Europe.

- Regional and global dialogues have been held in all the regions of the globe, ensuring balanced participation and representation of all levels of development.
- The dialogue has resulted in the formation of a strategic global coalition of partners including regional/local government representatives (UCLG, FOGAR, CLGF, etc.), civil society groups, democracy advocates, UN Agencies and Member States.
- The dialogue process has revealed the need and potential of national and local governments to work together as a critical input for the localization of the Post-2015 agenda. It confirms the need to establish effective coordination mechanism for strengthen vertical (multi-level) and horizontal (multi-stakeholder) relationships.
- The dialogue process has also been able to mobilize and contribute to strengthening multi-stakeholder partnerships, both at national and global levels, among national and local governments, civil society organisations, foundations, academia, religious institutions, trade unions and the private sector to support the localizing the implementation of the Post-2015.
- The dialogues at all the levels; local, national, regional and global have been highly inclusive, with the active participation of minorities, marginalized and disabled groups, young people and women.
- Preliminary results from the dialogue indicate the position to improve local governance processes, local institutional capacity and confirm the importance of territorial development as a strong base for global development.
- A strong cross-fertilization among the respective thematic areas for the implementation created the required synergy for action. This facilitated partnership with the private sector, civil society and culture for development, resulting in practical and relevant responses. This further augmented and promoted coordinated action among UN agencies (UNICEF, ILO, UNWOMEN, UNIDO).
- The dialogue also adopted innovative and participatory mechanisms including town hall meetings, focus groups, use of community media, radio and TV, online social networks and e-discussions. The utilization of ICT tools facilitated an open interaction and information exchange among a wide range of stakeholders, amplifying the voice of traditionally excluded groups.
4- Key Messages and recommendations

National, regional, global and online dialogues on localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda highlighted a number of issues that should be considered if the agenda is to be achieved at local level. These key messages have been outlined in the UNDG Report “Delivering the Post 2015 development agenda: opportunities at the national and local levels” that was submitted to the Secretary General of the UN.

Ownership and commitment

1. The review of the Millennium Development Goals demonstrated the need to communicate the objective of a global agenda more efficiently to all actors, and the need for stronger engagement of local stakeholders in the definition, implementation and monitoring of the Post-2015 Development Agenda. Support should be secured for communication, awareness raising campaigns and education for development at local level, with a special focus on young people.

2. A universal agenda should be designed to be adaptable to all countries and regions, and efforts should be made to communicate its relevance to all levels of government. The agenda should also respond to the challenges faced by small island developing states.

3. As experience shows, the achievement of many of the goals and targets of the MDGs depended on local governments and local stakeholders. The Post-2015 Development Agenda will need national commitment to provide appropriate legal framework, institutional and financial capacity to local governments, to promote local partnerships and to enable the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals at the local level.

4. Local governments play a crucial role in linking key local stakeholders in territorial development. They are part of the state and draw their unique legitimacy from their local democratic accountability and from working on the front line, close to citizens and communities. Civil society organisations, private sector, academy are crucial actors for the implementation of SDGs and their partnership with local governments should be enhanced.

5. Women’s political and social leadership is key for territorial development and the implementation of SDGs. More locally elected women will strongly contribute to ensuring women’s full and effective participation in decision-making in political, economic and social environments.

6. Distinctive local cultures, particularly of indigenous peoples, migrants and minorities, as well as traditional institutions and authorities, should be seen as a rich resource from which development policies can draw knowledge, legitimacy, participation and enhanced effectiveness. Localization will help to ensure that diversity is embraced.

7. The active role of local governments in international development cooperation is crucial to achieving development results, democratizing the aid effectiveness agenda, and promoting inclusive ownership.

8. National governments and multilateral organizations have to promote enabling environments to maximize local and regional governments and local stakeholder’s full role in development.
Roles and functions in integrated systems of local development

9. Decentralization, subsidiarity and good governance at all levels should be recognized as essential to implementing the Post-2015 Development Agenda. The transfer of responsibilities should be accompanied by appropriate resources and finance; and local capacities should be recognized and harnessed to implement the global agenda at the local level.

10. As the level of government closest to the people, local and regional governments are in a unique political position to identify and respond to development needs and gaps and be responsible for a wide range of functional responsibilities that go beyond service provision. Local governments face development challenges through planned public policies defined, executed and monitored with the participation of citizens and relevant local stakeholders.

11. Implementation responsibilities should be clearly divided among different levels of government, taking into account the distinct comparative advantage of each level, and accompanied by effective coordination mechanisms that harmonize efforts across them.

12. Territorial and urban planning, access to basic services for all, including housing, social safety nets and promotion of economic opportunities for men, women and youth were highlighted as priority areas for local governments in their quest to build more inclusive societies.

13. Local and Regional Governments, in close partnership with CSOs and the private sector, play a crucial role promoting territorial planning and local economic development as means of achieving the holistic development of territories.

14. Local stakeholders play a crucial role in the promotion of the key values of culture (heritage, diversity, creativity and the transmission of knowledge) as drivers and enablers of sustainable and inclusive development.

15. In concert with national governments and key local stakeholders, local governments can properly plan and manage a local response to the challenges of urbanization, and work to eliminate slum-like conditions and enhance resilience at local and territorial level.

16. The extraction of natural resources should be designed to conserve the environment and local communities. A proportion of the resources generated from such activities should be reinvested locally to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of the affected localities.

Implementation and monitoring

17. The global agenda should be inspired and implemented by local institutions, responding directly to the needs of citizens. It should: be transformative; include multi-level and multi-stakeholder participation; strengthen local leadership and ownership by citizens; generate a bottom-up approach; and be based on a wide consultative process which identifies solutions and ideas collaboratively; and should provide a framework for monitoring results.

18. National plans and public investment should contribute to localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda. It is imperative to further connect local and regional governments with national policies and strategies to better respond to the demands and needs of citizens.

19. More efficiency in the implementation of the Post-2015
Development Agenda will be possible with improved intergovernmental and multilevel coordination as well as greater local participation. This will ensure stronger and more responsive accountability. Strengthening of local governments is critical to foster coordination mechanisms at local level (horizontal coordination) and with national and international levels (vertical coordination).

20. A holistic approach to achieving the SDGs can be developed by defining clear means of engagement to encourage transparency and accountability (e.g. participatory budgeting and planning), and promoting collaboration between local governing bodies, CSOs, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders. Sound measures should be defined at local level to avoid and prevent fraud and corruption.

21. Strategic planning at the local level also promotes the integration of the three dimensions of development – social, economic and environment. Integrated and inclusive local development planning that involves all stakeholders is a key instrument to promoting ownership, fostering sustainable development and improving service delivery at the local level.

22. Territorial planning should take into account and strengthen the economic, social and environmental linkages between urban, peri-urban, and rural areas in order to secure balanced territorial development.

23. Financing territorial and urban development is a key challenge for local governments. To strengthen local self-government, efforts must be made to ensure that local government has access to sources of revenue and effective fiscal decentralization should increase local governments’ ability to rely on its own resources. In parallel, national governments should ensure predictable, regular and transparent transfers commensurate to the functions and responsibilities transferred to local governments. Creative, sustainable and equitable financing mechanisms need to be explored and applied at local level.

24. Strong efforts need to be made to improve local leadership, human resources, and the technical and management capacities of local governments, as well as their ability to mobilize local resources, deliver services, and involve citizens in planning and decision-making, with special attention to strategies to engage the most excluded.

25. Constructive dialogues and partnerships between local institutions and public and private actors are crucial to promoting democratic governance and empowering local stakeholders to own the SDGs.

26. Public private partnerships can support development at local level. However enabling legislation and local accountability mechanisms are essential to their effective implementation. It is recommended to launch initiatives at national level for the creation of a framework to build CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) policies to better fit local realities and processes.

27. Local level data is often not readily available to support local planning and monitoring of local development. Reforms to official data collection services will be necessary to assist sub-national governments (for instance with data identifying where needs are concentrated within each local jurisdiction) in monitoring progress. Local target setting will require the development of locally appropriate indicators taking into account the local context and environment. Localization will ensure a more accurate reflection of the
wellbeing of populations and provide a more detailed sub-national picture of progress.

Recommendations

28. National governments and international partners should acknowledge and define the role of local government and local stakeholders in setting, implementing and monitoring the Post-2015 Development Agenda to ensure further accountability and transparency. Implementation should be undertaken by the lowest possible sphere of government, in line with the principle of subsidiarity.

29. National governments and development partners should ensure that the localization of the SDGs has to be accompanied by the localization of resources, enabling local governments to raise more local revenue and secure allocations of national and international budgets.

30. Promote a bottom-up approach to ensure ownership of the Post-2015 agenda at the local level. National governments should undertake concerted and coordinated action to strengthen local stakeholders and put local development at the centre of development. Stronger legal and institutional frameworks with regard to decentralization will support good governance at all levels.

31. National planning institutions should align and embed the global development agenda into national and local development plans, and foster linkages and partnerships with other development actors to harmonize local development activities, avoid duplications and promote effectiveness.

32. National governments and international development community should recognize that local governments are best placed to convene the diversity of development stakeholders at the local level (civil society, including migrants, the private sector, academia, national bodies and international actors) and play an import role in developing and implementing integrated cross-sectorial strategies for local development.

33. Governments at all levels must be held accountable for responding to social inclusion and human security challenges, in their countries and cities, especially in deprived and post-conflict areas.

34. National governments and development partners should scale-up, replicate and adapt at the national and international levels. They should be adequate funding for local governments and local stakeholders to participate in peer to peer learning initiatives, to reinforce the relevance of the SDGs on the ground.

35. Decentralized development cooperation should be acknowledged and used as a modality to support the implementation of the future SDGs at local level, exchange of views and experiences between LRGs and promote south-south initiatives. Involve migrant communities in decentralized cooperation to benefit their countries of origin.

36. Strengthen the capacities of national, regional and international associations of local governments to participate in global dialogues, disseminate information and give policy advice and support.

37. Promote transparency and wider access to data and information to local government authorities and communities through ICT, online
38. The inclusion of a goal to ‘Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable’ in the Post-2015 Development Agenda would contribute to mobilize local authorities and stakeholders and to focus the attention of national governments and other international operators on the potential of urbanization as a key driver for sustainable development.

5- Way forward, a renewed partnership for localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda

At the conclusion of the UNDG mandated Dialogue on Localizing the Post-2015 Development Agenda, several of the institutions that led the process expressed an interest in continuing to advocate for the full involvement of LRGs and local stakeholders in the coming weeks and months.

UNDP, UNHABITAT and the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments for the Post-2015 Development Agenda towards Habitat III, are fully committed to continue collaborating for the localization of the Post-2015 Development Agenda.

With that aim, collaboration in the following areas has been identified:

- Contribution to advocacy processes to promote the inclusion of localization in the global agenda and foster the inclusion of LRGs and local stakeholders in the intergovernmental negotiation framework, through their representative networks.

- Strengthen multilevel dialogues among national and local governments and their associations to support the promotion of their common views by the country representations to the UN.

- Promotion of pilot initiatives to demonstrate the added value of LRGs in the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs; providing visibility and the scaling-up of existing good practices and innovations for localization. Special emphasis would be given to developing these pilot initiatives in low as well as middle and high income countries, including small island developing states as this new agenda will be universal.

- Establishment of a technical group on localization that would contribute to the development of the agenda. The technical group would be made up of international organizations, national governments, local and regional governments and their associations, as well as civil society organizations, the private sector and academia, in close coordination with the Global Taskforce.

As it has been stressed during the dialogues, and by stakeholders such as UNSDSN and the HLP, the localization of the SDGs should be accompanied by an enabling institutional framework at local, national and global levels, as well as by the localization of resources. Initiatives supporting this ambition would include:

- Provide inputs to the intergovernmental committee of experts on sustainable development financing in the context of the Third International Conference on
Financing for Development to support the full participation of LRGs in the financing instruments devised to implement the SDGs.

- Encourage the adoption of national legal frameworks to guarantee the full and effective participation of local governments in public expenditure allocation, fiscal decentralization, more efficient collection of existing revenue sources by LRG and predictable, regular and transparent transfers from national governments, including participation in development funds.

- Promote, together with the financing institutions, new forms of financing local and regional governments through the mobilisation of endogenous resources, concessional loans, the establishment of trust funds, crowdfunding mechanisms, the definition of local budgeting support programmes at local level and allocation of viable local revenue sources and strengthen accountability systems at the local level.

- Promote innovative ways of channelling international development funds directly to LRGs utilising both existing and proposed funds, e.g. a Green Climate Fund, and look at potential new funding mechanisms within the national legislation frameworks.

- Promote multi-stakeholder dialogues to strengthen participation and partnership with representatives of distinctive local cultures, particularly of indigenous peoples, migrants and minorities, as well as traditional institutions and authorities.

Nonetheless, the sufficient allocation of resources is not enough to guarantee development. LRGs institutional and operational capacities should be reinforced to allow them to implement and monitor the SDGs effectively. With this in mind, the following initiatives are proposed:

- Follow up closely on the conclusions of the capacity building dialogue, ensuring that they take into consideration the need for strong local institutions and local governments/associations to ensure sustainable development.

- Promote capacity building programmes for local stakeholders, including LRGs, taking stock of past experiences, direct exchanges between local and regional governments, peer-to-peer learning and twinning mechanisms.

- Develop strategies to strengthen the links between international cooperation programmes and capacity building at local level, with a special focus on decentralized development cooperation, which can play an effective role in reinforcing local capacities at both the political and operational levels. Thus, the global partnership for localizing the SDGs should contribute to harmonize efforts among partners.

- Promote commitment among development partners to reinforce LRG capacities to be able to be actively involved in the localization of the global agenda, including the identification, implementation and monitoring of the SDGs at local level.

The efficient implementation of the SDGs at local level will not happen without real ownership by citizens, notably through their local and regional governments. Transparency and accountability in partnership with civil society are key to the success of the agenda, together with the availability of reliable data and information. In this regard, the following initiatives are proposed in association with other local partners, such as academia:

- Renewed efforts to include reliable targets and smart and verifiable indicators able to respond to local contexts, needs and concerns.
- Contribute to strengthen national and local mechanisms to collect and disseminate local and regional data and information to monitor the SDGs and to inform citizens accordingly.
- Scale up mechanisms established at national and regional level to monitor the degree of implementation of SDGs at local level.

The way forward for a renewed global partnership on localizing the Post-2015 development agenda has to be closely linked to the next steps of the whole Post-2015 process. However, other global agendas should be taken into consideration due to the existing strong crosscutting linkages among them. For example, the Global Partnership for an Efficient Development Cooperation has already recognized LRGs as stakeholders playing a crucial role in development cooperation. Habitat III will also establish a new urban agenda that will require the commitment of cities’ leaders, local and national governments and international organizations to be successfully implemented. The renewed global partnership for the localization of the Post-2015 development agenda should thus be fully aware of these processes and promote the creation of synergies relating to the role of local development in improving the wellbeing of the citizens of the world.

6- References and resources

The World We Want:
http://www.worldwewant2015.org/

Localizing the Post-20105 Development Agenda:

UNDG
http://www.undg.org/

UNDP
http://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home.html

UN-Habitat

Global Task Force of local and regional governments development agenda and towards Habitat III
http://www.gtf2016.org/

Report on Delivering the post-2015 development agenda: opportunities at the national and local levels.