



GLOBAL TASKFORCE
OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS
FOR POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA
TOWARDS HABITAT III

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SPEECH

HABITAT III LOCAL AUTHORITY HEARINGS, NEW YORK

Dear Secretary General of the Habitat III Conference,

Dear Mayors,

Dear members of the Global Taskforce,

Dear colleagues, dear friends,

Greetings

I am pleased and honored to address this distinguished audience on behalf of the *United Cities and Local Governments* and the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments.

An organized constituency, ready to contribute

First of all, I'd like to thank Joan Clos for **listening to cities and territories**. His work to make the Habitat III process inclusive, and to ensure a strong role for all actors, including local governments, has been hugely significant. We know that this has been the result of an

unprecedented effort, with involvement from experts and practitioners from all parts of society, and we sincerely appreciate that.

Secondly, I'd like to express my pride in the way that local and regional government networks have responded to the call to contribute to the New Urban Agenda.

The invitation to engage in a global dialogue on issues that are central to our daily work – housing, public spaces, women's empowerment, climate change adaptation and mitigation, among so many others – has really motivated our constituency. **The recommendations we have put forward are based on intensive policy debates and collaboration over recent months**, both as part of the official Habitat III process and within our own global networks.

Zero Draft

We were extremely eager to read the Zero Draft of the Agenda, and we are delighted that so many of the recommendations of the Global Taskforce were included in the text released last week. We particularly welcome the references to **decentralization, subsidiarity and local governance**, without which sustainable development would be impossible.

The Habitat II Conference, twenty years ago, was ahead of its time in acknowledging local authorities as the “main partners” in the implementation of the Urban Agenda, and in its recognition of the transformative potential of decentralization. We very much welcome how the Zero Draft has **recovered this spirit** and would like to make proposals to go even further.

We were also pleased to see the text recognize the need to link the New Urban Agenda to the SDGs. It seems that we are in agreement that Habitat III represents a historic chance to harness urbanization to create inclusive, sustainable and resilient cities and territories, and to **drive the achievement of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.**

A seat at the global table

As the inheritors of the First World Assembly of Cities and Local Authorities, held in Istanbul during Habitat II, local and regional leaders and our networks see our contributions to the Agenda, and our representation of local and regional authorities at the Conference, as **one of our most important global mandates.**

In an urbanizing world, now, more than ever, we need an **enhanced partnership** between local governments (big and small) and the

international community, characterized by inclusive consultation and decision-making.

The international community must **listen to cities and territories** if it is to harness the potential of local and regional governments to contribute to the achievement of the New Urban Agenda.

That's why we especially welcome the recognition of **UNACLA** as a mechanism to improve dialogue between Member States and local and regional authorities.

UNACLA owes its very existence to the Istanbul Declaration made at Habitat II, which recognizes local authorities as "key partners" in the achievement of the Habitat Agenda. We should seek to ensure that UNACLA can play a strong role in the UN System, but we must also go further.

We hope that the draft's call for the strong involvement of local and regional authorities in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda will be reflected in the consultation and participation mechanisms open to us in the governing bodies of UN Habitat.

In order for local and regional governments to fully contribute to the achievement of global sustainability, this relationship must include a

seat for us at the policy-making table. The initial ideas in the Zero Draft on this question are very welcome but need developing.

We'd like to move beyond the "observer" status established by Rule 64 of the rule of procedures to **the recognition of local and sub-national authorities as a sphere of government**. This would allow us to play our full role as active partners in the implementation and follow-up of the Agenda.

We also call for an inclusive and participatory follow-up and monitoring process after Habitat III. This should include an effort to improve urban data collection, building on existing initiatives of local and regional governments, their associations and UN Agencies.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the importance of maintaining the Global Taskforce as a technical consultation mechanism and work space, and the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments, as key vehicles to transmit the voice of our constituency. These vehicles are self-organized and independent and allow local government networks to go beyond the interests of our individual organizations to work together for our shared goals and priorities.

I am confident that these Local Authority Hearings will allow us, not only to share our priorities, but also to understand the concerns and positions of Member States. We are open to dialogue with national government representatives and with civil society to ensure a truly inclusive agenda.

Thank you.