

Speech of the UCLG President

Signing Ceremony UCLG-EU Strategic Partnership

European Commission

28 January 2014

Dear Commissioner, Director,

Dear partners and friends around the world,

Setting the stage

I am honoured and very pleased to stand before you today as President of UCLG and Mayor of Istanbul. I think I can safely say that it is a very special day for all of us. It is a historic day, not only for those of us in this room, not only for the members that we represent, but also for the local and regional world and for the development agenda.

Our relation with the European Union has come a long way, and I am sure that my colleagues will expand on that.

Supporting the movement

BUT, above all, the Strategic Partnership that we are about to sign today is a great step forward. It recognises NOT ONLY the key role that local governments play and will need to play in development BUT also acknowledges the efforts made by local governments themselves to get organised. The organisations that are here today have a long history and represent the initiative of the local government community itself.

Supporting these structures is a strong sign of recognition of the work of cities internationally.

The strategic agreement that we are about to sign also challenges us. It challenges each of the organisations to enhance their activities, but it also challenges us all, COLLECTIVELY, to seek even more synergies, more means of collaboration.

It has been a long road, and indeed a very interesting one. We see this agreement as the culmination of the structured dialogue and the start of a new permanent dialogue, which involves continued coordination among local and regional government networks.

UCLG's very existence is the result of that will for collaboration and unity. We are very committed to make this happen and enhance coordination mechanisms.

The axes of the partnership

Besides being visionary, this agreement is very timely. It comes at a moment when the world is defining the international development agenda. These agreements give us additional strength to **contribute to the Post-2015 Agenda and to work towards Habitat III.**

It gives us enhanced means to put the importance of local development on the global agenda; to stress the need to include local governance in the Sustainable Development Goals; and to work on shaping localisation, its implementation, and addressing global challenges from a local perspective.

We will do this by providing great impetus to our consultation mechanism, the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, which includes all of us here in the room.

It should enable us to consolidate the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments as a key reference for the constituency, while building the capacity of members of the Taskforce to contribute to collective thinking and advocacy.

In this sense, we hope to count on the European Union's support to ensure that the new development agenda adequately reflects the transformative potential of urbanisation, and to support an enhanced place for local governments in the governance architecture resulting from Post-2015 and Habitat III.

The Strategic Partnership WILL **strengthen the network** and contribute to its sustainability. It will support our transformation to enable us to serve members with changing needs. This will be most challenging, and all of us here must play a part.

It is our conviction that we will be able to build stronger political networks which are resilient, more inclusive and with an even wider reach.

Last but not least, the partnership will promote **cooperation among local governments** and foster the development of a stronger learning agenda in UCLG.

In summary, the activities developed within the framework of this partnership should support our institutions to promote our shared values.

I would like to highlight only a few here today: democratic and participative governance built around subsidiarity, inclusive policies against poverty, dialogue for peace, and SOLIDARITY.

The core of our future collaboration

Allow me to take a few more seconds on this notion. SOLIDARITY is at the very core of our movement and convictions. Decentralised Cooperation, enhancing institutional capacities, promoting learning and peer-to-peer learning are the backbone of what we do; of our advocacy and of our networking.

We will therefore need to find ways to support local governments that are facing great challenges around the world. Our solidarity with them will be instrumental, and while we make our organisations ready to serve the membership and represent them internationally, we will also need to start talking about concrete tools to help cities facing humanitarian crises.

Improving the lives of the communities we serve, developing cities that promote inclusion and equality, that take into account the needs of future generations and that provide services for all, is the final aim of everything we do.

Dear colleagues, I will stop here, and will end by thanking the European Union for this bold step and by calling all of us to be bolder, and to start thinking about our next steps now.

Together we stand stronger and it will be a great pleasure to continue shaping our agenda together.