

**Report of the Special event on Sustainable cities  
At the High Level Political Forum first meeting  
New York, 24 September 2013**

Rapporteur: Dr Kadir Topbaş, Mayor of Istanbul, President of UCLG and member of the High Level Panel for Post 2015 agenda.

*Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,*

*It is a great honor and privilege to serve as rapporteur of the Special event on sustainable cities conveyed by the President of the General Assembly, and hosted by the Turkish mission, yesterday, 23 September.*

*Many relevant stakeholders and partners met on this occasion to address what they believe to be a crucial issue for the coming centuries.*

*As the Mayor of Istanbul, a city of more than 15 million inhabitants and the President of World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments, as member of the High Level Panel to work on the post-2015 agenda, I am glad to convey to you the outcomes of the special event on sustainable cities, sharing with you the experience of metropolitan leaders, civil society and in particular women and Youth and their development partners and the common vision of Local and Regional Governments organizations worldwide gathered in the Global Taskforce for Post 2015 and towards Habitat III.*

**Background**

The world has changed over the last 15 years. Today, emerging economies and middle-income countries are helping to redefine the global economy. Urbanization in its broad sense, including metropolitan areas and regions is rapidly increasing in all continents.

Sustainable urbanization is, therefore increasingly recognized as a crucial issue for the coming years, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.

The new development agenda is one and universal, it affects the North and the South, the East and the West. It affects low income countries but also middle and high income countries. In all cases well managed urbanization will be key. This agenda cannot be developed without taking into account the territory in which global urbanization will have impacts: it must overcome the dichotomy of rural versus urban, and ensure cohesion among territories within the important metropolisation processes that are taking place.

It must take into account all actors as well, the political leadership, civil society, the private sector and the international community.

We all have a joint responsibility to speed up progress towards poverty eradication and achieving more just societies. Multiple and intertwined crises have emerged coexisting against an unsustainable depletion of the world's natural resource base.

**Putting the creativity of cities to the service of reducing inequalities**

The increase of inequalities within and across countries and regions is stressed in many international forums as one of the Achilles heel of the MDGs: 5% of the world population use 23% of the global energy supply. Roughly 40% of the world's population lacks access

to adequate sanitation, and another 1.2 billion people have no facilities at all. This reality is no longer about least developed countries alone. More than 70% of the world's poorest people live today in middle-income countries, and primarily in cities.

In many countries, local and sub-national governments play increasing roles in economic development and job creation especially for the youth, the provision of basic services, infrastructures and local development strategies that are central to the reduction of poverty and disease. It is also the case for climate change adaptation, and disaster risk reduction, which require an integrated territorial approach and the improvement of urban planning.

The goals and targets of the future development agenda should address these challenges, but also provide some guidelines on how and who should act.

A large part of this discussion should focus on financial institutions that can support the agencies, and levels of governments that have the responsibility for addressing basic needs and managing local development. The Post 2015 agenda needs to link development and sustainable agenda (based on the outcomes of Rio +20).

### **Urban governance**

Good urban management needs decisions taken by local and sub-national governments to be well articulated, to work in closer partnership with national governments and to count on clear proceedings of communication and participation of local actors, in particular the organised communities, the youth, the women and other stakeholders.

The post 2015 agenda needs to **promote stronger support to effective decentralization to strengthen city-region management and a new urban partnership to develop a multilevel governance framework**, based on **national urban policies**.

### **Social Inclusion**

The fundamental purpose of governance is to work towards a healthy, safe, tolerant and creative society, ensuring the universal enjoyment of culture and its components, and protecting and enhancing the rights of citizens.

Given the increasing diversity of their population, and on-going migrations towards cities, local and regional authorities must commit to the promotion of culture as a vital part of development and as an unavoidable prerequisite for a diverse and peaceful society.

Furthermore, inclusion policies should guarantee universal access to basic services and the safeguard of citizens' rights; guided by the values of equality, solidarity and respect for differences.

### **Urban planning**

This new urban partnership should contribute to **promoting strategic urban planning** as a way to engage a wider platform of stakeholders in the development process of the city. This is important especially for intermediary and peripheral cities, which are increasingly becoming place of short-term stay, where people come to look for job opportunities and services, frequently floating or settling informally.

**Instruments enabling local governments to undertake long term planning and control of critical land resources** for agriculture (Food security) and environment

(health and natural resources), but also to finance urban development as well as for efficient organization of urban services, should be explored.

### **Access to basic services**

Support to 'slum' upgrading must remain a priority to build inclusive cities and improve the living conditions of the billion people living in informal settlements, lacking basic infrastructure and services.

Financial viability is the mayor challenge to service improvement and provision, not only because of the significant investments needed but also because of maintenance costs.

However, the public service agenda is not limited to partnership and access for the urban poor, as much investment is expected in improving, for example waste management, energy use and transport systems. Indeed the agenda of public services is highly dynamic, due to advancing evolution in demography, regular technological progress and the need to ensure disaster prevention.

### **Prevent climate change impacts and disaster risks**

Addressing the urgent need to limit greenhouse gas emissions, prevent disasters and unlink development from rising environment degradation requires leadership, support and action from local governments.

Successful climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction – which itself needs the ability to change and adapt as risks change – depends on local and subnational governments and their capacity to launch coordinated responses with full involvement of the citizenship.

**A very large part of building more resilient cities involves addressing the large deficits confronting many urban governments in basic infrastructure and services** (lack of piped water, sewers, drains, all-weather roads, solid waste collection, emergency services and building standards) but also of having full involvement from citizens.

### **Revising international governance mechanisms**

The success of alternative development strategies depends on a fundamental revision of the global partnership, the institutional and financial framework that should underpin the goals and targets. The new framework should be supported by a stronger and more democratic international governance structure that includes new stakeholders and covers issues and regulations not being addressed at present.

### **An agenda of all levels of governance, focusing on the needs of the people**

All participants have agreed that the Post-2015 process success can only be guaranteed if we develop a sense of ownership and accountability at all levels, international, national sub-national and local.

It should promote a high degree of policy coherence and active participation of citizens in decision making.

Our hope is that this agenda will further be rooted in the needs of the people and communities at the local level. We strongly believe that this global agenda should be applicable to all, both developing and developed countries.

### **A stand-alone goal and targets for Sustainable cities**

We believe that urbanization should be considered as a cross-cutting issue and that those goals and targets will be much more efficient and successful if "localized". We further suggest to adopt a stand-alone goal on sustainable cities with the following components:

- Developing strong and accountable institutions: through improved democratic local governance, participation of the poor and other marginalised groups in decision making, increase capacity of local and regional authorities to lead pro-poor policies, including participative strategic planning; better intergovernmental coordination, harmonisation processes and effective decentralisation
- Addressing inequalities: Through quality universal access to basic and social services, improving the quality of life of slum dwellers, reducing gender inequalities, ensuring food security, fostering inclusive societies that provide opportunities for youth;
- Safer and more resilient communities: well-planned, designed and governed cities, including a territorial approach and cohesion, improving environmental health and reducing disaster risk and violence, creating resilience to climate change,
- Fostering environmental sustainability: in transport, mobility and building standards, water and sanitation, waste management and support for renewable energy and greenhouse gas emission reduction, conservation and sustainable management of the biodiversity and natural resources;
- Promoting local economic development: with a focus on pro-poor policies and decent job creation in a green urban economy which promotes sustainable consumption and production;
- Culture as driver and enabler of development and people-centered societies.
- Conservation and sustainable management of the biodiversity and natural resources
- Local Government Development Cooperation (Decentralized Cooperation) as instrument to promote solidarity and peer learning.

### **Linking all the Agendas**

Last but not least, we believe the new Habitat Urban Agenda need to be an integral part of our discussions, linking the MDGs, Sustainable and Habitat Agendas.

In this regard, we would like to recall the outcomes of Rio+20, acknowledging the work done at the sub- national and local levels and the need strengthen all the role of all Major Groups.

We are fully convinced this is our common agenda with shared responsibilities and we offer our commitment to work hand in hand for a world of dignity for all.