Interfering in the Global Platform by Bringing Up Asia-Pacific Perspectives: Our Contribution in WUF9

UCLG ASPAC brought the voice of local governments within Asia-Pacific Region to the global stage in the ninth session of the World Urban Forum (WUF9) with the theme “Cities 2030 – Cities for All: Implementing the New Urban Agenda,” Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia 7 – 13 February 2018. UCLG ASPAC inspired the global participants by leading three key sessions discussing topics that would accelerate the sustainable urban development: Women Mayors Forum, City Enabling Environment, and Public Space for All. UCLG ASPAC also collaborated with Global Task Force’s Team on the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments, Localising the global agenda and local governments’ role in its monitoring and implementation, and with its partners to exchange knowledge on the Belt and Road Initiative, financing, urban planning, culture, collective housing and upscaling city networks.
WUF9, as the first forum to be held since the adoption of the New Urban Agenda (NUA) at the Habitat III Conference in Quito, Ecuador (2016), uniquely highlighted NUA as a way of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also called for aligning NUA monitoring with the SDGs' follow up and review process (which include voluntary reports by different stakeholders), particularly SDG 11 on sustainable cities.

**Mainstreaming Women’s Role in Local Governments**

The Women Mayors Forum (held on 8 February 2018) took theme “Empowered Women Challenging the Norms.” The forum inspired global attendees on the eye-opening roles of women mayors in their leaderships. Dato Maimunah Mohd Sharif, UN Habitat’s Executive Director once a Mayor of Penang, highlighted women’s transformative leadership. “Power is used to create change, and develop people and communities; it is often a non-hierarchical and participatory form of governance that gives priority to disadvantaged sectors,” she said. She was also mentioning her effort in integrating gender perspective into governance process and development of policy and planning. The discussion also presented various other perspectives: from cutting the channel that made community undervalue women (Mayor Tri Rismaharini, Surabaya) to engaging men in the efforts (Mayor Stephany Uy-Tan, Catbalogan) and valuing the hard-fought campaign that now allow women to vote and take part in the political life in society (Carola Gunnarson, Mayor of Sala). The forum, presenting panel women leaders from different world regions also continuously reminded the importance of empowering women in expressing themselves and also to make efforts to gain trust and change the mind of people, particularly in fields where women cannot be a leader. Bernadia Tjandra dewi Irawati, Secretary General of UCLG ASPAC, summed up, “Gender equality means that we all understand about the position of both men and women, and that they are equal. And women empowerment is a must.”

**Providing Tool for Local and National Government to Move Forward**

UCLG ASPAC also provided tool for local governments to accelerate their efforts in pursuing sustainable development. The introduction of this tool was arranged in a launching session of City Enabling Environment Rating (CEE Rating) Publication. The session exposed to the global participants recognition of local governments in the constitutional and legal framework, and also the unfortunate fact that the implementation of their authority hasn’t been able to be carried successfully. “Many countries have legislated decentralisation and roles of the local government but very few have been implemented,” said William Cobbett, Director of Cities Alliance. Patrick Keuleers, Director/Chief of Profession, Governance and Peacebuilding, UNDP, therefore mentioned, “CEE acts as a method to identify which sectors should we try to engage in enhancing cooperation between national and provincial government.” Imparting insight from the similar assessment done by UCLG Africa, its Secretary General Jean Pierre Elong Mbassy said, “Enabling Environment created
by different countries for local government’s work is not about what is done by the government, but it is an assessment of cities and countries based on how they are doing and what they do need.

**Pushing Through Inclusion of Local People in Developing the City**

UCLG ASPAC, through a two-day Public Space training and session, put under spotlight the importance of public space strategy. The session took note the importance of balancing the approach of top-down and bottom-up, from ‘designing’ the place to ‘feeling’ the needs and context of local people, and shifting from engaging local people to empowering them. Dr. Gyeng-Chul Kim, Special Advisor for Transport of UCLG ASPAC, said “in achieving sustainable human city and public space, we need a paradigm shift from private car ownership to public transport, from moving the privileged few to transporting all, and from giving space for private cars to open public space for all.” At the end of the discussion, it was revealed that attending participants highlighted the importance of collaboration between different departments, diversity of uses, sensory dimension in public space development, public space’s role as a place to take value from and to contribute to grassroots communities, and mediating between stakeholders competing for public space control and use. UN Habitat’s Cecilia Andersson stressed the need to understand how people can move freely in the city and how public spaces enable them to do so. On the last day, participants praised the resource speakers for the new ideas and angles on public space they learned, and expressed their interest to remain in touch with one another. The training program was closed by UCLG ASPAC Secretary General, giving her remarks on how public space builds the character of a society, and encouraging the participants to immediately do something for public space given their roles in the city.

At the end of the world level forum, UCLG ASPAC joined hands with other global leaders and to take part in Kuala Lumpur Declaration on Cities 2030. It reflects the global commitment to localise and implement the New Urban Agenda as a catalyst in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. The declaration recognises the importance of cooperation amongst all relevant stakeholders to establish sustainable, inclusive and resilient cities. Subnational and local governments’ role should be supported, communities should be empowered, strong urban governance should be implemented, and monitoring and assessment mechanisms should be established.