

**Opening remarks by Under-Secretary-General Mr. Liu Zhenmin**

**Fourth High level Local and Regional Governments Forum**

**Monday, 12 July 2021, 08:00AM**

**Video Message**

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

**[Welcome]**

It is my pleasure to welcome you to this fourth edition of the high level Local and Regional Governments Forum, which is organized as a special event in connection with the 2021 UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

On behalf of UNDESA, I also want to recognize our partners from the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments, UN-Habitat, UNDP and Local 2030 for their great collaboration in making today's event happen. I want to take this opportunity to greet all participants who are connecting from all over the world today.

**[COVID-19]**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed our world profoundly, causing tragic loss in human life, deep suffering, and economic hardship across the globe. The pandemic has set the world's progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals at grave risk, undermining years of development efforts.

Local and regional governments around the world have been at the forefront combating this pandemic and its impacts, and these past months have clearly demonstrated that we cannot have sustainable recovery and development without their efforts.

Because of their direct link with communities and citizens, local and regional governments have a critical role in responding to the needs of the most vulnerable, including by ensuring that public services, such as basic health, housing, education, clean energy and water, are functioning and safeguarded.

The rapid expansion of social protection, the emergence of community resilience, and the development of unique partnerships at the local level have been truly inspiring to witness.

### **[Voluntary Local Reviews]**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the Political Declaration of the 2019 United Nations SDG Summit, Heads of State and Government recognized the critical role of cities, local authorities and communities in realizing the SDGs, and committed to empowering and supporting them in pursuing the 2030 Agenda.

An analysis of the Voluntary National Reviews that were presented by Member States at the HLPF in 2020 showed that in many instances, the implementation of the SDGs relies on the concrete application of programmes and policies at the local level.

As the global Secretariat of the HLPF, UN-DESA is deeply committed to ensuring robust monitoring and review of progress in SDG implementation at all levels.

In this context, it is encouraging to see how the local and subnational reviews - also known as the Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) - are picking up pace.

While the VLRs are not directly mandated by the 2030 Agenda, these reviews have proven useful to drive localization and accelerating SDG implementation. They can also serve as a remarkable collection of concrete examples of lessons learned and successful experiences.

The VLR process can bring multiple benefits, such as:

- support more integrated policymaking and coordination;
- serve as a catalyst for increased engagement with civil society, the private sector and academia;
- help enhance data collection;
- serve as a communication tool between different levels of government; and
- facilitate the search for new and innovative means of implementation.

I am pleased to share that UNDESA has created an online platform to compile and showcase those VLRs and has also drafted Global Guiding Elements for VLRs to support these efforts, building on those prepared for the VNRs. I invite you all to look at these tools.

## **[SDG Good Practices]**

Over the recent years, UN DESA has been collecting concrete examples of SDG implementation efforts by all actors to inspire and shine the spotlight on practices that truly work and could be scaled up by others. It has been encouraging to see how many cities around the world have been creating innovative ways to enhance the lives of their citizens.

For instance, the Municipality of Lima, in Peru, has set up an initiative to support access to fresh foods during the COVID-19 outbreak. To date, over 3000 families have been trained ensuring vulnerable people's livelihoods and basic needs.

In Deqing County, China, a Rural Digital Governance System, has been set up to modernize agricultural production, improve farmers' digital literacy, and promote high-quality medical resources to the countryside.

I want to take this opportunity to invite all of you to register your SDG Acceleration Actions through the global, online platform set up by UN DESA.

We currently have more than 300 SDG Acceleration Actions registered by governments and stakeholders around the world, including 24 from local and regional governments. I will be looking forward to seeing more ambitious commitments from local and regional governments featured in this global databank.

**[Closing]**

Ladies and gentlemen,

The next ten years have been designated as the Decade of Action and delivery for sustainable development. As the UN Secretary-General has stated “COVID recovery and our planet’s repair must be the two sides of the same coin”. By working together in solidarity, we can rebuild and advance united in a common ambition to achieve sustainable development for all, leaving no one behind.

I wish you all a successful event!

Thank you!

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