



**FIFTH LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS FORUM ON THE 2030 AGENDA**  
***Fostering the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals from the Local Level***  
***towards the 2023 SDG Summit***

**SUMMARY**

**7th & 12th July 2022**

Recording and highlights available:

7<sup>th</sup> July – [Here](#)

12<sup>th</sup> July – [Here](#)

**Background**

The **Fifth Local and Regional Governments Forum** took place on Thursday, 7 July, and Tuesday, 12 July 2022, as a Special Event of the **2022 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF)**. The Special Event was organized by the UN DESA, Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (GTF), UN-Habitat, UNDP, and Local 2030.

The objective of the fifth edition of the Local and Regional Governments Forum was to showcase the relationship between the SDGs in review and the innovative actions taken by local and regional governments for their implementation, highlight the progress made and recommendations from reporting processes such as the VLRs and VSRs, as well as to foster multilevel governance and partnerships among different spheres of government, the international community and other stakeholders towards accelerated implementation of the SDGs.

The Forum consisted of two days, each comprising two panel discussions bringing together more than 300 participants, virtually and in person. The Forum highlighted the importance of enhancing and accelerating the implementation of the SDGs at the local level, discussed the role of voluntary local reviews (VLRs) and voluntary subnational reviews (VSRs) in the follow-up of SDG implementation. During the event, local and regional governments representatives shared concrete recommendations to support the achievement of the SDGs under review at the 2022 HLPF, as well as for the 2023 SDG Summit.

**Summary**

07 July 2022 – Virtual Session

## Opening

During the opening ceremony on 7 July, *Ms. Emilia Saiz, Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments*, stressed the importance of the localization of the SDGs in the achievement of the universal development agendas and the engagement of local communities in this process, including in the lead up to the 2023 SDG Summit.

*Ms. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)*, underlined the progress made in placing local and regional governments at the heart of the global processes, showcasing the great successes of the **11th World Urban Forum** held in Katowice from 26 to 30 June 2022, **the High-Level Meeting on the Review of the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda** on 28 April 2022 and the first meeting of the Steering Committee of Local 2030 Coalition.

*Mr. Achim Steiner, Administrator, UNDP*, in a video message, shared how UNDP is supporting local and regional governments achieving SDGs in many countries. He stressed how local governments, being the primary interface between citizens and governmental institutions, had provided rapid and effective responses to pandemic- and conflict- related disruptions. While continuing to provide necessary public services, they have kept being places where innovation happens.

Concluding the 7<sup>th</sup> July opening ceremony, *Mr. Berry Vrbanovic, Mayor of Kitchener and Governing President of United Cities and Local Governments*, stressed that the multiple and interconnected crises facing the international community call for collective, inclusive, and reinvigorated action within a framework based on equality and collaboration among all stakeholders.

### **Panel: Voluntary Local Reviews and Voluntary Subnational Reviews: Key Policy Tools for the SDGs**

The first panel “Voluntary Local Reviews and Voluntary Subnational Reviews: Key Policy Tools for The SDGs” was moderated by *Mr. Amson Sibanda, Chief, National Strategies and Capacity Building Branch, Division for Sustainable Development Goals (DSDG), UN DESA*. The session focused on the voluntary local reviews (VLRs) and the voluntary subnational reviews (VSRs), as key tools for innovation and for the engagement of local actors in the 2030 Agenda follow-up.

*Ms. Carolina Cosse, Mayor of Montevideo (Uruguay)*, emphasized that VLRs are critical instruments to advance in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. She further called for a high degree of cooperation among stakeholders, access to data and financial resources, and socialization of lessons learned as essential means to drive transition towards sustainability.

*Ms. Belinda Gottardi, Mayor of Castel Maggiore (Italy)*, showcased the efforts made in the VSR process, which builds upon both qualitative and quantitative aspects of SDGs implementation at subnational level. She called for a concrete mechanism to finance local governments in their localization efforts, the establishment of data collection systems and indicators for implementation at local level.

*Ms. Veronica C. Hitosis, Executive Director, League of Cities of the Philippines*, pointed to financial limitations as great challenges facing smaller municipalities that inevitably tend to prioritize the implementation of some of the SDGs at the expense of others. She further emphasized, however,

that many local governments in the country have established a sustainable development-related institutional function and have participated in the first VSR of the Philippines.

Referring to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the need for adaptation to the local context was frequently stressed. *Mr. Rashid El Abdi, President of the Regional Council of Rabat Sale Kenitra (Morocco)*, urged for a collective effort to solve the most serious common challenges but stressed the need to adapt solutions to the local context and pointed at local and regional governments as key actors to take actions tailored to local communities' needs. He concluded by reminding that financial constraints and lack of capacity building are affecting the local and regional governments' possibility to play this role.

*Mr. Emilio Jatón, Mayor of Santa Fe, (Argentina)*, emphasized the importance of aligning local planning and policy making with the 2030 Agenda. In addition, he shared that trainings on sustainable development are being provided for public officers, within a framework of raised awareness on SDGs and strengthened engagement of the local community.

*Mr. Lusanda Batala, Senior Sector Expert, National Planning Commission Secretariat (South Africa)*, stressed that no development can happen without the involvement of communities at the local level. He underlined the feedback and mutual beneficial linkages between the 2030 Agenda at the international level, national development strategic planning and local development plans. He stressed the importance of having multistakeholder governance, monitoring, and reporting mechanisms.

*Mr. Jonan Fernandez, Secretary General for Social Transition and Agenda 2030, Presidency of the Basque Government (Spain)*, shared the success of the Basque multistakeholder governance mechanism and highlighted the importance of having annual action plans with specific and clear objectives to set an implementation roadmap and, annual reviews that can evaluate the SDGs implementation progress.

*Ms. Luz Amparo Medina, District Director, International Relations, City of Bogotá (Colombia)*, mentioned that the responsibility to achieve the 2030 Agenda is strongly connected to the consolidation of alliances with key partners in the private sector as well as civil society. She also reminded the great contribution provided by local governments in the VNRs processes of Colombia.

### **Panel: Moving Beyond Reporting: Multilevel Governance and Multistakeholder Collaboration**

The second panel "Moving Beyond Reporting: Multilevel Governance and Multistakeholder Collaboration" was moderated by *Rafael Tuts, Director, Global Solutions Division, UN-Habitat*. The session highlighted the experiences in multilevel governance mechanisms and multistakeholder collaboration.

*Mr. Ville Taajamaa, UN Agenda 2030 Work, City of Espoo (Finland)*, pointed out that VLRs and VSRs are at the same time achievements and points of departure for greater commitment and implementation. He highlighted the importance of multistakeholder dialogue and interconnection between governments at all levels, what he called "the intersection between vertical and horizontal collaboration." He emphasized that although tailored solutions and actions are necessary for each local context, the VLR processes can be exchanged and learnt from.

*Mr. Mahadi Che Ngah, Mayor of Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia)*, highlighted the importance of SDGs in local action plans and roadmaps. He further stressed the benefits of identifying potential synergies between various stakeholders to foster cities' collaboration and of disseminating information on sustainable development through the SDG Center Digital Twin work.

*Ms. Silvina Rivero, Minister of Coordination, Province of Cordoba (Argentina)*, reminded that inflation, unemployment, and poverty are deeply challenging the local and regional governments' capacity of intervention. She further showcased how local governments engage in national policy making concerning health, education and technology. She concluded by highlighting some public-private partnerships as great examples of multistakeholder cooperation.

*Mr. Nicolás Cuesta, Mayor of San Justo (Argentina)*, discussed the importance of having a roadmap and manuals to support and guide step by step the implementation of the SDGs at local level. In addition, he highlighted the collaboration with the national government and with different sectors of society. He concluded by claiming that actions and commitments need to be also backed up by additional funding from different levels of government and the international community.

*Mr. Affonso Massot, Executive Secretary of International Affairs, São Paulo State (Brazil)*, focused on the importance of integrating the SDGs with the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) investments and policies in the state administration. As a great example of stakeholders' collaboration and engagement, he mentioned the State of São Paulo Environmental Agreement, which brings together over 1600 companies voluntarily committed to reduce greenhouses gas emissions.

*Ms. Victoria Alsina, Councillor, Foreign Action and Open Government, Catalonia (Spain)*, underlined the role of local and regional governments mentioning the *Regions for EU Recovery* initiative, a great example of cooperation between local and regional governments to tackle common challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

*Ms. Almudena Maíllo, Councillor of Madrid (Spain) and Secretary General of UCCI*, showcased that almost thirty Ibero-American cities are working together towards the SDGs, implementing many projects focusing on culture, women, biodiversity, and circular economy.

Multilevel and inclusive governance has been central for progress on specific SDGs, such as SDG 14. *Ms. Luísa Salgueiro, Mayor of Matosinhos (Portugal)*, emphasized that coastal cities have a great role to play in climate adaptation and resilience. Moreover, she reminded that many local communities depend on the ocean for their livelihoods. Consequently, the protection of marine and coastal ecosystems enables the protection of jobs within a sustainable and inclusive blue economy framework.

## 12 July 2022 – In-person Session

### **Opening**

During the opening ceremony on July 12th, *Ms. Emilia Saiz, Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG)*, emphasized the role of local and regional governments in overcoming these difficult times to truly ensure that no one and no place is left behind. She called for a networked, multilateral system based on multi-level governance and multistakeholder collaboration as necessary and urgent in light of the 2023 SDG Summit and the UNSG's Summit of the Future.



*H. E Mr. Abdulla Shahid, President of the UN General Assembly*, stressed that local and regional governments were at the forefront of the COVID-19 pandemic response, vaccinating people, promoting economic development, and sustaining jobs. He advocated for an inclusive educational planning and decision making and for mainstreaming gender issues across all levels and all fields of work to help overcome the persistent barriers to women empowerment. He concluded by reminding that the achievement of SDGs requires an all-of-governments and all-of-society approach.

*Mr. Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, UN DESA*, highlighted that, as demonstrated by the analysis of the VNRs, the implementation of SDGs relies on the concrete application of programs and policies at the local level. In addition, VLRs have proven useful tools to accelerate SDG implementation, being a remarkable collection of concrete examples of lessons learned and successful experiences benefiting also Member States in their research for actions that can be scaled up at national level. He also emphasized that VLRs are increasingly being prepared not only by capitals and large cities, but also by provinces, states, districts and small cities, including in rural areas.

*Mr. Berry Urbanovic, Mayor of Kitchener (Canada) and Governing President of United Cities and Local Governments*, stressed that more needs to be done to empower local and regional governments. In this regard, he reminded that many countries submitting a VNR have not consulted their local and regional governments in the process and few countries involve local and regional authorities in national coordination mechanisms for the SDGs. He concluded by calling for a truly networked multilevel system where decisions are locally owned, people-centered, and place-based.

### **Panel: Local Public Services and Policies Fostering the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda**

The panel “Local Public Services and Policies Fostering the Achievement of the 2030 Agenda” was moderated by *Mr. Haoliang Xu, UN Assistant Secretary-General, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director of Bureau for Policy and Programme Support*, who highlighted the important role local government played to maintain local service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic, despite the increasing rate of poverty across the world.

Some local government’ representatives shared the policy making efforts of their municipalities referring to VLRs and VSRs submissions. For example, *Mr. Toshihiko Ota, Mayor of Toyota City (Japan)*, mentioned the heterogeneity of the challenges facing Toyota City, where rural and urban areas interlink. The first VLR submitted by the city in 2022 describes and monitors progress for each goal. He further stressed the importance of VLRs in assessing the current local standing in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

*Mr. Alberto Pereira Fernandez, Mayor of Campo Aceval (Paraguay)*, shared how VLRs promote the collection and analysis of data regarding the progress on SDGs at the local level, mainstreaming efforts, gaps and results and disseminating knowledge about the 2030 Agenda at the community level.

Collaboration was identified as a key enabler for the achievement of the SDGs. *Mr. Magnus Bernston, VP of the Regional Council of Västra Götaland (Sweden) and President of the Assembly of the European Regions*, reminded how local governments need to be close to citizens and undertake

a constant dialogue as the basis for their policy making and planning. He advocated for continuing knowledge exchange within the constituency of local and regional governments and beyond.

*Mr. Pablo Javkin, Mayor of Rosario (Argentina)*, focused on local inequalities, from gender to unequal access to technology. He stressed the potential of partnerships, especially between public and private sectors, specifically to support programs for better access to technology and education for young people.

*Ms. Celeste Connors, Executive Director of the Hawai'i Green Growth and Co-chair of the Local 2030 Islands Network*, stressed the importance of public-private partnerships to carry forward a long-term sustainability commitment and the importance of engaging local communities in the progress monitoring and implementation of the 2030 Agenda through open access facilities for citizens and stakeholders.

*Mr. Johnny Araya, Mayor of San José (Costa Rica)*, stressed the need to promote the participation of local and regional governments in national monitoring and coordination mechanisms, as a pillar of a multilevel and networked governance for SDGs implementation.

With regards to the alignment of local policies with the SDGs, *Ms. Irací Hassler, Mayor of Santiago de Chile (Chile)*, highlighted the relevance of the SDGs for the policy planning of the capital city. She pointed at the efforts of the local government to achieve safe and green public spaces, new models for waste management and to fight climate change.

*Mr. José Hila Vargas, Mayor of Palma of Majorca (Spain)*, shared the success of transparent means of disseminating knowledge about the financial budget devoted to each SDG in local policy making.

### **Panel: Looking Towards The SDG Summit: Localization at The Forefront**

The second panel of the day "Looking Towards the SDG Summit: Localization at The Forefront" was moderated by *Ms. Lucy Slack, Secretary-General, Commonwealth Local Governments Forum*, that emphasized the expectations for multilevel governance and the importance of localization for the next year's summit and for the overall implementation of the 2030 Agenda in the coming years.

*Mr. Jan Van Zanen, Mayor of the Hague (Netherlands)*, reminded that promoting localization does not deprive national governments of their responsibilities. In fact, they remain key actors for the achievement of the SDGs both as direct implementers and as enablers of local and regional governments' action.

*Mr. Yoseph Shawarbeh, Mayor of Amman (Jordan)*, reflected on the multistakeholder partnerships and multilevel collaboration of the municipality aiming at strengthening the resilience of the city and contributing to the SDG implementation efforts of the national government.

*Mr. Turan Hançerli, Mayor of Avcılar (Türkiye)*, mentioned the local resilient program as a clear example of localization of SDGs. He also recalled how solidarity and cooperation bloomed at the municipal level at the beginning of the pandemic, showing that local communities have a transformative power during crises. However, he noted that to find concrete solutions to global issues, local governments need more financial resources and strengthened capacities.



*Ms. Valerie Dumontet, Vice-President of Aude (France)*, highlighted the impact of local governments' intervention in multiple crises and their realistic perspective in adapting international agendas to territorial realities. She called upon national governments to recognize the complementarity of local action to the global agenda and to financially support local and regional governments in their efforts. *Dr. Ingolf Dietrich, Commissioner for the Sustainable Development Goals, Federal Ministry for Development and Economic Cooperation (Germany)*, shared some initiatives of localization supported by Germany in Mexico and Georgia, stressing the importance of budgetary aspects to ensure meaningful and impactful action by cities and regions.

Multilevel governance practices were addressed by some panelists. For instance, *Ms. Sandra Pellegrom, Netherlands SDG Coordinator*, shared that local and regional governments strongly contributed to the VNR process, which includes their perspectives and concerns. She further pointed out that multistakeholder dialogues have been arranged to promote an inclusive and integrated approach to the 2030 Agenda.

*Ms. Pilar Díaz, Barcelona Provincial Council, Deputy to the Presidency, Delegate for International Relations, and Mayor of Esplugues de Llobregat (Spain)*, showcased the efforts of the province of Barcelona towards the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through a strategic plan and the collaboration with the municipalities. She also underlined the necessity to improve the institutional and operational capacity of local and regional governments as we are aspiring to an effective multilevel governance system.

*Leen Verbeek, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, Council of Europe*, claimed that two thirds of the SDG targets can only be implemented if national governments provide local and regional authorities with the adequate skills and tools. This includes also involving local and regional governments in regular consultation mechanisms with central governments and parliaments at national level.

## **Closing**

Delivering closing remarks, *Ms. Emilia Saiz, Secretary General, United Cities and Local Governments* clearly stated that localization is a bottom-up process with engagement of people as the essential element. She introduced *Mr. Fabrizio Rossi, Secretary General, Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR)*, who drew urgency, financial capacity and engagement as key messages from the sessions just concluded.

*Ms. Maria-Francesca Spatolisano, Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Inter-Agency Affairs, UN DESA*, focused on VLRs and VSRs as key demonstrations of the commitments of the local and regional governments to the 2030 Agenda. She further underscored the need for collaboration to bring concrete solutions and long- term commitments.