



**Opening Remarks
Executive Director**

**Local and Regional
Governments Forum
HLPF**

**Wednesday, 12/07/23
10:00-13:00
Conference Room 1**

- **Excellencies,**
- **Honourable ministers,**
- **Honourable Mayors, Governors and representatives of local and regional governments and their Associations**
- **Dear partners,**
- **Colleagues, friends, ladies, and gentlemen,**

A very good morning to you all and welcome to the 6th edition of the Local and Regional Governments Forum.

It is with great pleasure that I stand before you today, at this gathering of people dedicated to advancing sustainable development and fulfilling the promise of Agenda 2030. Your presence here serves as a powerful inspiration, a testament to your unwavering commitment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We find ourselves battling a range of challenges, including recurrent and intensifying natural disasters and climate-related emergencies, political conflict, food insecurity, rising costs of living, and growing inequalities. **These complex and interlinked crises remind us every day of the fragility of our systems and the imperative of collective action.**

It is indeed no secret that our current system perpetuates rather than mitigates unsustainable practices. For example:

- **Food waste.** Shockingly, approximately one-third of all food produced for human consumption, equivalent to about 1.3 billion metric tons, is wasted or lost each year. This inefficiency contributes to hunger and malnutrition,



places an immense strain on resources, and exacerbates environmental degradation.

- **Housing.** 165 million more slum dwellers have emerged globally over 20 years, reaching 1 billion in 2020.
- **Water sanitation.** Globally, 2.2 billion people still lack access to safe drinking water, 3.4 billion lack safely managed sanitation services, and 1.9 billion people lack hygiene services.
- **Inequalities.** Projections suggest that between-country inequality rose by 1.2 per cent between 2017 and 2021, the first such increase in a generation.

The SDG11 report reminds us that cities are increasingly the places of inequality. However, cities also hold the key to the solutions.

It is through the pursuit of sustainable urbanization that we can address the core principle of leaving no one and no place behind.

And here is where the role of local and regional governments comes into play. They chart the development pathways of local communities, delivering essential public services and acting as catalysts for transformative change.

Excellencies, ladies, and gentlemen

Local governments equipped with the capabilities to invest in capacity building, enhance institutional efficiency, develop infrastructure and foster partnerships with civil society, can guarantee a continuous, inclusive, and high-quality delivery of services to their constituents.

Their proximity to local communities enables them to formulate development strategies that are tailored to address specific and diversified needs and priorities.

However, despite the fact that solutions are to be found at the local level, local and regional governments cannot act alone. Transformative partnerships based on national enabling environments and solid investments at the local level are essential to drive sustainable progress.



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Dear friends,

The second session of the United Nations Habitat Assembly, held in June in Nairobi, adopted a resolution on localization of the SDGs. In this resolution, Member States acknowledged that achievement of the SDGs requires a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach anchored on the work of local and regional governments.

This recognition is also the fruit of the tireless work of the global associations of local governments such as UCLG and the Global Task Force, with whom we are proud to co-organize this Forum, along with UNDESA, UNDP and the Local 2030 Coalition.

UN-Habitat is committed to supporting your endeavours in strengthening the voice, resources, and capacities of local and regional governments worldwide.

As the Secretariat and permanent co-chair of the Local2030 Coalition, the UN-wide initiative dedicated to localizing the SDGs, we are committed to bringing the UN system closer to local and regional governments and supporting their efforts and initiatives. The Coalition also supports the Localization Window of the Joint SDG Fund, which aims to provide catalytic resources that will help advance national and local efforts to achieve the SDGs. UN-Habitat's SDG Cities initiative aims to support 1000 cities around the world to embrace the SDGs and access finance for projects and initiatives that accelerate progress towards SDG goals and targets, impacting 1 billion lives.

These are only some of the ways in which we support to local and regional governments and their efforts.

Dear colleagues,



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Let me conclude by thanking again all the partners that have made this sixth edition possible and inviting you all to join us also during the SDG Summit in September, where we will continue bringing the voice of local and regional government to the centre of the global debate. I also want to extend an early invitation to you for next year's milestones: **the Summit for the Future, and 12th edition of the World Urban Forum** in Cairo.

Together, let us forge ahead in our shared commitment to localize the SDGs, ensuring that that sustainable development becomes a tangible reality for all, and that no one and no place is left behind.

I wish you a fruitful discussion.

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