

Intervention in the Co-chairs Meeting on « Sustainable cities », OWG7, January 6th, 2014
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Following the outcomes of Rio+20 Summit, the Member states of the United Nations have to agree by 2015 on a list of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), that will determine the priorities of the international community to respond to the challenges of poverty eradication, and environmental crisis.

Those decisions will be extremely important to open up long term perspectives, create dynamics between actors, elaborate new means of action, as well as mobilize financial resources.

The Rio Declaration adopted in June 2012 has highlighted the importance of urban issues. On this occasion, Secretary General of the UN Ban Ki-moon declared about the strategic role played by cities : « *The road to global sustainability runs through the world's cities and towns. By building more sustainable cities and regions, you will lead us to a more sustainable world* ».

I don't have enough time today to go into details but we know that, in the next 20 years, global population growth will happen in cities. Cities are where new production and consumption patterns are elaborated. And we cannot eradicate poverty or stabilize global CO2 emissions without defining a sustainable urbanization model.

In that way, proposing a stand-alone SDG fits perfectly into paragraph 247 of the Rio Declaration, which underlines that those goals should, I quote, « address and be focused on priority areas for the achievement of sustainable development » and should be « global in nature, and universally applicable to all countries ».

I would like to stress two crucial elements to explain our proposal.

First, I would like to recall that it is global coherence of the public and private actions implemented in the urban areas that make it possible to address the challenges we are usually working on : regarding environment, air and water quality, reduction of CO2 emissions, biodiversity preservation; or regarding development, access to education, to adequate health services, food security, decent jobs.

An issue as crucial as urban planning cannot just be a target of one of the points I have just mentioned. Yet, decisions made on urban planning have major consequences on human settlements or transport policies, and thus have fundamental impacts on CO2 emissions, as well as

access to decent jobs. The stake of urban planning is then clearly underlined in paragraphs 134 to 136 of the Rio Declaration.

By supporting a stand-alone goal on « Sustainable urbanization », we also insist on territorial cohesion and interaction, and we don't limit our approach to the city itself. We consider that sustainable urbanization includes rural areas, which are essential to guarantee food security in the city, and we insist on the urban sprawl issue, which is preoccupying since it leads to farmlands and biodiversity destruction.

We also stress that the elaboration of sustainable urbanization needs collaboration between the different levels of governance in the territories, particularly local and subnational levels. It needs also to be based on a close link with the civil society actors : private sector and associations, with a specific attention to initiatives led by youth and women organizations. We therefore fit perfectly into paragraph 137 of the Rio Declaration.

A stand-alone Sustainable Development Goal on sustainable urbanization would thus be action-oriented and easy to communicate, if I refer to the conditions exposed in paragraph 247 of the Rio+20 Declaration.

Networks of local authorities, some think tanks and UN agencies have worked a lot these last months to show it is important to have this goal and to exchange on the targets to precise it. We have today several texts that develop these ideas, that are convergent, and we will continue to improve and consolidate.

My final word will be to recall that we build on the experiences of local Agenda 21 as successful means of implementation of the Rio Declaration of 1992, to achieve local sustainability and participation among all stakeholders at the local level.

To conclude, I would like to underline the fact that a stand-alone goal is not just supported by local authorities. A common contribution from different members of the Major Groups supporting this SDG on Sustainable urbanization has been elaborated.

This contribution is available for consultation on the UN website on sustainable development, on the page dedicated to the thematic cluster on « Sustainable cities and human settlements ».

Urban challenges are the daily preoccupation of a growing majority of global population. The civil society actors can measure every day the difficulties, as well as the opportunities, created by urbanization. That is why many of them agree on supporting a stand-alone SDG.