

## **LOCAL GOVERNMENT DECLARATION TO THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

**We, the Mayors, Leaders and representatives of the cities and local governments of the world, and of their international and national associations, meeting in Johannesburg on the occasion of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), agree the following Declaration:**

*Welcoming* the initiative of the United Nations and its Member States in convening the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which meets at a crucial time in the life of our planet,

*Committed* to the goals and targets of Agenda 21, the Habitat Agenda and of the UN Millennium Declaration, in the struggle against global poverty and for sustainable development;

*Reaffirming* our commitment to the principles of sustainable development, including solidarity, transversality (integrating the economic, social and environmental dimensions), participation of civil society in decision-making, and responsibility towards future generations and disadvantaged populations;

*Aware* that, despite many successes and much commitment (in particular by local governments) in relation to Agenda 21, we remain far from achieving a sustainable future for humankind;

*Gravely concerned* at the ongoing process of depletion of the earth's resource base and degradation of the global environment;

*Convinced* that, if we are to resolve the challenges facing the world, a strong partnership between all spheres of government (from international to local) is essential;

*Recalling* the important role played by local government representatives in the Rio Earth Summit of 1992, and ascribed to local government for the future in Agenda 21, not only in chapter 28 (which dealt specifically with the local authority contribution) but also in many of the thematic chapters;

*Recalling too* that since 1992, over 6000 local governments have set up a Local Agenda 21 process with their community, and many more have undertaken strategies to integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of local development;

*Recalling further* the conclusions, undertakings and requests set out in the Final Declaration of the 2<sup>nd</sup> World Assembly of Cities and Local Authorities in Rio de Janeiro on 6 May 2001;

*Endorsing* the conclusions and future strategies set out in the Local Government Dialogue Paper for the WSSD;

*Welcoming* the growing partnership between local government and the UN and other international organisations, towards strengthening decentralisation and development

of capacity of local governments and their associations, including in particular the establishment by UN-Habitat of the UN Advisory Committee of Local Authorities in 2000:

### **The context**

1. With half of the world's population now living in urban settlements, and with the world's population due to grow to 8 billion by 2025, the issue of sustainable urban management and development is one of the critical issues for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. National states cannot, on their own, centrally manage and control the complex, fast-moving, cities and towns of today and tomorrow - only strong decentralised local governments, in touch with and involving their citizens, and working in partnership with national governments, are in a position to do so. The future of rural settlements is also of vital importance, with urban/rural linkages and interdependence becoming key issues for the future of sustainable development.
2. The effects of economic liberalisation and globalisation are felt most sharply at local level. Whilst many have benefited from these processes, e.g. via new inward investment into local economies, the growing gap between rich and poor, with increases in absolute poverty levels in many places, has led to growing problems of insecurity, social exclusion and of environmental degradation. These negative impacts of globalisation are felt everywhere, but in particular in developing countries, and threaten to undermine the positive work of local authorities. Unsustainable production and consumption patterns likewise add to these negative impacts.
3. In 1992 in Rio, the international community and all partners established the goals and actions necessary to achieve a sustainable future. Overall, the steps taken to date to implement Agenda 21 have not been adequate to meet the challenges identified. The decade since 1992 has seen conflicts, massive breaches of human rights, and ecological and other natural disasters, in addition to growing social inequality. A large part of the world's population lives without access to even the most basic services.
4. Since 1992, however, many local governments have played a significant and positive role in taking forward the Rio engagements, implementing Agenda 21 and the Rio conventions in the local sphere. In this period, the role of local government as catalyst for development and community leader has also evolved, with a strong emphasis on partnership with business and civil society. Local government's relationship with the UN has also developed in a positive way. However, the exclusion of local government as a recognised sphere of government within the United Nations system continues to pose a significant barrier to the ability of local governments to achieve sustainable development.

## **Our principles**

5. We believe there are four inter-connected principles for local governments, which need to inform and underpin all of our efforts to combat poverty and build a just, peaceful and sustainable world:
  - First, the overarching principle of *Sustainable Development* (integrating the economic, social, cultural and environmental dimensions)
  - Second, *Effective Democratic Decentralisation* (with a substantial set of key competences, and commensurate financial resources for local governments)
  - Third, *Good Governance* (effective leadership, transparency, accountability, probity, proper management and effective services, equitable access to services, a commitment to partnership working, and institutional capacity building.)
  - Fourth, *Co-operation and Solidarity* (partnerships for exchange of good practice, support and mutual learning)

We aim to work positively with, and bridge the gap between, our national governments, the international community and civil society to promote these principles, and to develop skills and capacity.

## **Commitments by local governments**

6. Arising from the above, we reaffirm our strong commitment to Agenda 21, and further commit ourselves:
  - To support the development targets set out in the General Assembly's Millennium Declaration, including the overarching goal of reducing by the year 2015 the proportion of those who live in absolute poverty, and the target of achieving a significant improvement in the lives of 100 million slum dwellers by 2020;
  - To work with national governments and the international community to strengthen local government's capacity to deal with sustainable development, including via the dialogue processes agreed in 2001 by the United Nations Commission on Human Settlements and the General Assembly's Declaration (paragraph 37) on the occasion of the five year review of the Istanbul Human Settlements Summit;
  - To develop city and local development strategies which integrate the economic, social, cultural and environmental dimensions of development;
  - Over the next decade, to build upon the successes of Local Agenda 21 and accelerate implementation through Local Action 21 campaigns and programmes that create sustainable communities and cities while protecting global common goods;
  - To undertake City to City / Municipal International Co-operation activities and partnerships, aimed at mutual learning, exchange of good practice, and the

development of capacity for sustainable development, in particular in the context of growing urbanisation;

- To develop a new and deeper culture of sustainability in our cities and localities, including a commitment to socially and environmentally sound procurement policies and consumption patterns, sustainable planning, investment and management of resources, and promotion of public health and of clean energy sources; to this end we ask all local governments to discuss endorsement of the Earth Charter;
- To develop effective and transparent local governance, including a proactive community leadership role, working with the local organisations of civil society and the private sector, and ensuring the equal participation of women and men, and the active involvement of disadvantaged sectors;
- To manage local governments holistically so as to achieve development goals effectively by the integrated management of financial, human and natural resources.

### **Requests to the international associations of cities and local governments**

7. We ask the members of the World Associations of Local Authorities Co-ordination - the Arab Towns Organisation, the International Union of Local Authorities, the United Towns Organisation and Metropolis - , the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), the Organization of Islamic Capitals and Cities (OICC), and the regional and thematic local government associations, within their respective mandates:

- To organise a worldwide Millennium Towns and Cities Campaign to promote local government's awareness of, and active commitment to, the international development targets set out in the General Assembly's Millennium resolution, and to work in partnership with the UN to this end;
- To engage in partnerships with national governments, international organisations and other sectors to implement campaigns and programmes to implement Local Agenda 21;
- To promote and organise programmes for local government strengthening, mutual learning and capacity-building, via City to City / Municipal International Co-operation and sustainable cities networks, including local government exchanges of experience in support of sustainable development;
- To strengthen the partnership for sustainable development with the UN, in particular with UN-Habitat on issues related to the Habitat Agenda , with UNDP on development programmes, with UNEP on relevant environmental issues, with the WHO on health issues and with UNITAR on questions of sustainable development training; and to enhance co-operation with the Commission on Sustainable Development and relevant UN bodies and Agencies within their remits;

- To develop closer relationships with the UN more generally, including through supporting the work and development of the UN Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA), as a "portal" for co-ordinating UN involvement with local government;
- To support the completion of the process of unification between IULA and UTO, with the aim of having a worldwide united general representative organisation as advocate for local government and as interlocutor with the UN and international community;
- To organise an ongoing debate over the impact of liberalisation on local public services, with a view to ensuring that key public interest services are maintained, and that social and environmental factors are properly integrated into public decision-making.

### **Requests to national governments**

8. We ask our national governments:

- To work with local governments and their national and international associations, in order to strengthen local government's capacity, competences and resources (including local leadership development), in particular in meeting the challenges of sustainable development and urbanisation;
- To involve local government as equal partners in action-oriented national sustainable development strategies and alliances;
- To launch and support national campaigns for local sustainable development planning and the protection of global common goods so as to support Local Action 21;
- To play an active and positive role in carrying out the decisions of the General Assembly and UN Commission on Human Settlements on effective decentralisation and the strengthening of local authorities, including the identification of key principles and enabling legal frameworks appropriate for the challenges of Agenda 21 and the Habitat Agenda;
- To promote and establish relevant, demand-driven programmes for local government strengthening, mutual learning and capacity-building, via City to City / Municipal International Co-operation and networks, ensuring that legal powers, financial resources and appropriate monitoring and evaluation mechanisms are in place;
- To support the work of relevant UN agencies including UN Habitat in developing effective partnership working with local government, to tackle the issues of sustainable development, effective democratic decentralisation, and good governance;
- To affirm the principle of partnership with cities and local governments as a vital sphere of government in achieving sustainable development.

- To guarantee and reinforce the vital role of local government as an essential partner in regional initiatives for sustainable development, in particular the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD).

### **Requests to the UN and international community**

9. We ask the UN and the international community:

- To recognize that local government is an equal sphere of government, vital to the success of sustainable development and good governance, and not a non-governmental or sectoral group
- To reinforce the spirit of partnership with local government in all relevant areas of activity and mutual interest, in particular supporting the specific role of UN-Habitat as local government's key partner in relation to sustainable human settlements;
- To develop and strengthen the work and role of the UN Advisory Committee of Local Authorities, using it as a co-ordination point for work with local government across the UN system, and to intensify partnership with the international associations of local government, supporting their process of unification;
- To develop and promote City to City / Municipal International Co-operation and networks as an effective tool for exchange of good practice, learning, development and capacity-building, building on initiatives such as the Cities Alliance;
- To increase public aid for development, dedicating at least 0.7% of GNP to co-operation programmes with developing countries, to cancel the unsustainable debt of highly indebted poor countries, and ensure that a significant proportion of the finances so provided or released is used for local government programmes (in particular decentralised co-operation) and services;
- To establish a new framework for global economic governance, supporting equitable economic exchanges and integrating the social and environmental dimensions;
- To work for the effective decentralisation and strengthening of local governments and their networks, through the dialogue and other processes agreed by Member States in the UN Commission on Human Settlements and the General Assembly, identifying key principles and enabling legal frameworks appropriate for the challenges of Agenda 21 and the Habitat Agenda;
- To review the impact of economic liberalisation on public services, with a view to maintaining key public interest services, and ensuring that social and environmental factors are properly taken into account in decision-making;

- To preserve the world's major ecological balances, in particular through concrete commitments by all States to implement the Conventions on Climate Change and Biodiversity.

## **Conclusion**

10. We live in an increasingly interconnected, interdependent world. The local and the global are intertwined. Local government cannot afford to be insular and inward-looking. Fighting poverty, exclusion and environmental decay is a moral issue, but also one of self-interest. Ten years after Rio, it is time for action by all spheres of government, all partners. And local action, undertaken in solidarity, can move the world.