



**UNACLA**  
UNITED NATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

## THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDAS, IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

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ISTANBUL



### UNACLA MEETING REPORT

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## BACKGROUND

The United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA) was established by the Governing Council Resolution 17/18 of 1999 as an advisory body that would serve the purpose of strengthening the dialogue of the UN System with local authorities from all over the world involved in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda 1996. Within the years, the Committee has established itself as a representational body of the main local government networks with their purpose to bring their voice and perspectives to the United Nations System and to contribute to the implementation of the main global agendas in their local dimension.

With its Secretariat co-hosted by the United Nations Programme of Human Settlements (UN-Habitat) and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), UNACLA works on a representative manner, its members bringing the consensus position previously adopted by their respective consultative mechanisms and governing bodies. The UNACLA members represent about 323.000 institutions at all scales, from small towns to municipalities in small island states, from intermediate cities and big metropolises.

The main purpose of UNACLA today is to contribute to the local implementation of the newly established global agendas, making local government voice and experience heard in the UN System, supporting the sharing of the recommendations of the local government constituency and facilitating structural dialogue between local and central governments.

UNACLA members gathered in Istanbul to have a strategic discussion about the way ahead, including the role of local governments in the implementation of global agendas and to provide guidance in the strategic actions to undertake.

## REPORT OF THE MEETING

UNACLA met in Istanbul on April 24<sup>th</sup> 2017 under the theme "The global development agendas, implications for local governments" and upon the invitation of Kadir Topbaş, Mayor of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and current Chairman of UNACLA.

This meeting happened in a critical time when local governments and their associations face the challenge of involving their members in the local implementation of several global agendas, including the Development Agenda 2030 and the New Urban Agenda (NUA). It was an excellent opportunity for strategic thinking and fruitful exchange. It also provided inputs for the Local Government Delegation to the Governing Council of UN-Habitat that took place in Nairobi from 8 to 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017. The meeting contributed to advance in the local implementation of the global development agendas and to further explore the real implications for local and regional governments and the role of UNACLA to support these processes.

The meeting brought together over 35 participants. Political representatives included **Kadir Topbaş**, Mayor of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality (Turkey) and Chairman of UNACLA, **Fatma Şahin**, Mayor of Gaziantep (Turkey), Vice-President of UCLG for the Middle East and West Asia region, and President of UCLG-MEWA; **Aysen Nikolaev**, Mayor of Yakutsk (Russian Federation) and Vice-President of UCLG for the Eurasia region; **Carlos Martínez Minguez**, Mayor of Soria (Spain), Vice-President of UCLG for Europe and Vice-President of CEMR; **Stephany Uy-Tan**, Mayor of Catbalogan City (Philippines), **Lehady Vinagnon Mitoun Soglo**, Mayor of Cotonou (Benin), Councillor Reverend **Mpho Moruakgomo** of Kgatleng District (Bostwana) and President of the Commonwealth Local Government Forum. The meeting included the participation of Secretaries General and representatives from the UCLG World Secretariat, UCLG Sections (Africa,

Asia Pacific, Eurasia, CEMR, MEWA, Metropolis and Forum of Regions), the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) and Citynet. A complete list of participants can be found in the Annex.



The meeting comprised five sessions:

- Session 1: Introductory remarks.
- Session 2: The local implementation of the global agendas: opportunities and challenges for local and regional government.
- Session 3: The role of UNACLA in facilitating the dialogue between local and central governments to implement the global agendas at local level.
- Session 4: The voice of local governments in the UN: the upcoming UN-Habitat Governing Council.
- Session 5: Formal UNACLA meeting.

Over the course of one day, participants addressed the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, the progress made in the localization of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the crucial role local and regional governments are called upon to play in these intertwined agendas. The later sessions further explored mechanisms for establishing a structural dialogue between UNACLA members and the UN System based on the recommendations elaborated by the local government constituency and set strategic direction to the UNACLA Secretariat about the strategic actions to undertake during the period 2017 – 2019.

The sessions were conducted as a strategic conversation: identifying key issues, challenges and opportunities, and discussing priorities for action at global and local levels. A synthesis of the discussions at the sessions follows.

### Session 1: Introductory remarks

Kadir Topbaş described 2016 as a decisive moment as it brought together the largest representation of Mayors and Governors ever seen. He recognized that the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments was able to create the necessary momentum to make local voices heard and to consolidate the local government constituency as constructive, prepared to take global responsibilities and contribute with solutions, ideas and inspiration.

Mayor Topbaş recalled the incredible dedicated time and consensus-making efforts undertaken by local governments during the negotiations of the Agenda 2030, where local governments had an unprecedented presence and visibility. Obtaining the “Urban SDG” on sustainable cities (SDG 11) was the result of local and regional government advocacy and common efforts. It reaffirmed the recognition that development needs to be local, as local governments are able to provide the necessary link between global agendas and citizens, and that local government can bring real and concrete solutions to global problems and threads.

Finally, he stressed the importance of “Localizing” the global agenda for development, as it is not easy to translate what the global commitments mean for local governments, but also to raise interest and better explain to local governments across the world why global agendas are important for them. He thanked the “Localizing SDGs initiative” jointly conducted by UN-Habitat, UNDP and the GTF, for setting up a methodology and a tool that could open the work to localize the New Urban Agenda and called partners for contributions to make sustainable urban development a reality.

Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN-Habitat, celebrated the initiative showed by local and regional governments to move quickly into implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and the New Urban Agenda. He emphasized how Habitat III had brought together two paradigm shifts. The first one recognizing the importance of urbanization as a tool for development and as a transformative force that can be harnessed to enhance economic productivity, inclusive growth, and environmental sustainability. The second paradigm shift refers to the central role of central governments in establishing national urban policies to ensure the quality of urbanization. Participants acknowledged this important aspect and stressed the need to ensure enhanced dialogue among the different spheres of governments. Clos added that the NUA emphasizes and strengthens the role of national governments in creating an enabling policy environment for sustainable urbanization while calling for empowerment of local and regional governments to fulfil their leadership role in ensuring that cities and human settlements, as objects of development, are themselves planned, developed and managed in sustainable ways.



*“Advances are made and challenges ahead are big. It is now more important than ever to bring the added value of cities as places for opportunities for all”* Kadir Topbaş, Mayor of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and Chairman of UNACLA.

*“The effective implementation of the NUA will depend not only on the actions of LRGs, but also on states enabling well-resourced, empowered local governments to implement the New Urban Agenda in cities and territories”.* Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN-Habitat.

Finally, Clos reinforced the commitment of UN-Habitat to expand its outreach and impact through its Technical Cooperation Programme to enhance access by local, regional and national governments to knowledge, expertise and blended financing and to strengthening the work of UNACLA as a credible and effective platform for engagement in the UN system processes and dialogues.

## Session 2: The local implementation of the global agendas: opportunities and challenges for local and regional governments

The second session provided strategic thinking about the role of local governments in the implementation of the recently approved global agendas, including a presentation by Josep Roig, Secretary General of UCLG, and by Christine Musisi, Director of External Relations Division of UN-Habitat.

Josep Roig advocated for the need to obtain an enabling environment for local and regional governments. He stressed the importance of local governance, democracy and leadership; highlighting the importance of the interdependency that local governments face in their daily work. He further described this enabling environment to be able to provide local and regional governments with the adequate resources (human, financial, capacity building, technological and of infrastructure and planning) to cope with the current trends of urbanization. He highlighted in this context the links between the Global Goals as brave objectives worth striving towards and the enabling framework to be provided by the implementation of principles described within the New Urban Agenda.

He highlighted that the position conveyed by the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments in Quito was that, the successful implementation of the new global agendas will require effective multilevel governance, as well as strong partnerships with private sector and civil society actors. Local governments need to go beyond sectorial approaches; they need to leverage the inter-linkages between urban planning and the social, economic, environmental and cultural dimensions of urban policies. The World Congress of Metropolis to be held in Montreal in June (19-23th) will be a key occasion to look at this topic and the increasing phenomenon of metropolization.

To conclude, Mr. Roig recognized the importance for local and regional governments to be active on implementation the New Urban Agenda and the role reserved in the monitoring and implementation section of the Quito Outcome Document to the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments (WALRG). By focusing on monitoring and reporting, they can create trust; demonstrate their impact and showcase how they are already delivering the agenda. In this context, UNACLA can play a complementary role ensuring consultation and communication between local governments and central governments and within UN-Habitat and other UN agencies in between sessions of the Assembly.

Christine Musisi presented the opportunities brought to local governments by the New Urban Agenda and the facilitating role of UN-Habitat in the implementation process. Ms. Musisi emphasized how the New Urban Agenda provides strategic actions that will enable local, regional and national governments to implement the Sustainable Development Goals most effectively. The NUA can be seen as a guide that addresses the way cities are managed, governed, developed, financed, designed and planned; and how these actions will reflect in the achievements of the different SDGs. She recognized the current and new paradigm where local governments are recognized at the global level as the actors and leaders in the implementation of the global agendas. This represents the need for local leadership but also opportunities to find new scenarios of collaboration with central governments in order to influence and participate in shaping national urban policies, improve urban policymaking and local governance and opportunities to scale up and share experiences on urban transformation initiatives.

Ms. Musisi summarized some of the opportunities of engagement key for local and regional governments and the implementation of the agendas and that will count with the leadership and

participation of UN-Habitat. Besides the UN-Habitat Governing Council other important scenarios will be the High Level Political Forum of 2017 on “Eradicating poverty and promoting prosperity in a changing world”; the 2018 edition “Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies” in 2018, where an in-depth review of SDG 11 will be carried out; the World Urban Forum 8 (Kuala Lumpur, 7 – 13<sup>th</sup> February 2018) and the National and Global Report progress on the NUA to be produced by 2020.

Finally, Ms. Musisi addressed the value of UNACLA and the importance of the collaboration with UN-Habitat. UN-Habitat expertise has proven to be useful in supporting local and regional governments to engage with national governments on shaping national urban policies that are contextualized to the country and territorial needs. On the other hand, UNACLA has given the agency important inputs to territorialize and better adjust its work to local reality. In this sense, UN-Habitat is fully committed to support the work of UNACLA in its essential to facilitate a platform for central and local government dialogues and to contribute to increase the UN System co-ordination and coherence in supporting local governments.

### Session 3: The role of UNACLA in facilitating the dialogue between local and central governments to implement the global agendas at local level



The third session was dedicated to strategic thinking on the added value of UNACLA to implement the global agendas. It counted with the contributions of: Fatma Şahin, Mayor of Gaziantep (Turkey), Vice-President of UCLG for the Middle East and West Asia region and President of UCLG-MEWA; Carlos Martínez Mínguez, Mayor of Soria (Spain), Vice-President of UCLG for Europe and Vice-President of CEMR; Aysen Nikolaev, Mayor of Yakutsk (Russian Federation) and Vice-President of UCLG for the Eurasia region; and Stephany UY-TAN, Mayor of Catbalogan City (Philippines). The Mayors, representing the networks of different regions of the world, discussed on the need for continuous and fruitful dialogue between the different spheres of government as one of the principal conditions for effective urban governance and for the effective implementation on the global agendas at local level.

Key messages that emerged during the presentations and debate included:

- Recognition that Mayors and Governors are in the front line of managing and governing cities and territories. However, it is also important to take into account that they need the support of the national level and that there is still a lot to do in increasing understanding about the different roles that the diverse spheres of governments need to play. The 2030 Development Agenda and the NUA establish the basis for strong and capable local and regional governments, as they both call for accountable institutions and for increased service to the communities. Both agendas must be seen as mechanisms to help the international municipal movement historical claims vis-à-vis national governments.
- Local ownership of the implementation of the global agendas is crucial for a successful process. The different levels of government should have a clear distribution of competencies regarding implementation. Coordinating mechanisms should be put in place to guarantee that all levels are involved where they should. Local and regional governments will need support in establishing adequate mechanisms of monitoring, evaluation and analysis of impact on the actions related to the local implementation of the global agendas.
- It was agreed that sustainable development goes beyond economic development and that citizens should be put at the centre of every decision, as well as at the centre of the process of planning and implementing any public policy. Emerging challenges should be integrated in our vision of sustainable development. Some of the identified challenges included migration, the fight against drugs and violence, climate change, environmental risks, the promotion of human rights, the need for transparency and accountability, inclusion of young and women in the formulation and implementation of local policies and global agendas, etc. If local governments fail to consider these challenges, they risk facing failure. The efforts to prevent, protect and/or correct should involve all leaders and levels of administration and should be reflected in the support given to local governments in terms of the resources available (financial, human, technological, etc.). Global scenarios such as UNACLA are essential to put the situation into a global perspective and to share possible solutions.
- Specific mentions to the challenge of migration and to climate change were brought into the discussion several times. The particular consequences of these challenges imply the need for change in decision-making processes by local governments and how they adjust to guarantee better quality of life for their citizens. This necessary adjustment requires increasing demand for the services delivered by local governments (housing, infrastructure, education, health and so on) and therefore implies an increase financial support and capacity development to translate the solutions into actions. Empowering local governments on these areas need a coordinated action and stronger cooperation with central administrations, but also increased cooperation at global level.
- Some of the speakers reflected on the importance of inclusive and participatory governance. As old communication and governance tools are no longer effective, local and regional governments need to innovate and establish new mechanisms to include citizens, with specific focus to women and youth. Increased public participation in decision-making processes and in implementation of local policy is essential to regain citizen trust in local administration. Both the SDGs and the NUA call for a more inclusive policy making process to include the citizens and that foster better ways of participation of private sector and the organized civil society.

- The session also reflected on the opportunities given to local governments by the global agendas in terms of a paradigm shift regarding local development, including the need to approach local welfare with a more global perspective as the challenges of climate change, poverty eradication, and promotion of human rights establish a direct local line of implementation. Likewise, the agendas and their local implementation are presented as an opportunity to implement methods of effectiveness and efficiency in the development projects at the local level. Additionally, the global agendas can be seen as an opportunity to reinforce the historical claims from local governments in relation to the need for a reform of the competency map and of the financing structures at their respective national level.
- Speakers acknowledged that the implementation of the global agendas require specific action at the local level. There is the risk that local governments perceive the global agendas as a top-down imposition, even as a “foreign” one. Local governments should make an effort to raise awareness among both citizens and the overall public sector about the relevance and pertinence of the changes and benefits that the implementation of global agendas can bring. Additionally, and in order to foster the processes of decentralization and local autonomy, local governments should continue to promote networking at national, regional and global levels. UNACLA can play an important role in facilitating the dialogue between central and local governments on the local implementation of global agendas, as well as supporting the participation and engagement of local governments in the development of national strategies.
- Special recognition was given to the Localizing SDG initiative promoted by UCLG, UN-Habitat and UNDP, which is also starting to develop concrete strategies in the regions. The implementation of the global agendas is closely linked to taking action at local level but it is not automatic to think that local governments feel that SDGs have an impact in their daily lives. Advocating about the importance of SDGs for local policies and the importance of the participation of local governments associations in the national strategy for development as well as be active in the monitoring processes is essential for the success of implementation. UNACLA can foster and raise awareness on this specific topic and initiative as a mean to recall on the importance of putting the territories and their people’s priorities, needs and resources at the centre of sustainable development.

#### Session 4: The voice of local governments in the UN: the upcoming UN-Habitat Governing Council

Joan Clos, Executive Director of UN-Habitat recalled the importance of UNACLA to strengthen the links between local governments and UN-Habitat during the 26<sup>th</sup> Governing Council of UN-Habitat that takes place in Nairobi on 8-12th May 2017. Besides the usual processes of approving UN-Habitat budget and strategic plan; the Governing Council will comprise side events and will be the opportunity to influence formal resolutions as well as to create a scenario for exchange and dialogue among the sustainable urban development stakeholders.

One of the key achievements will be the resolution endorsing the Action Framework for Implementation of the New Urban Agenda (AFINUA) that wants to materialize the principles enshrined in Quito into an action plan. For Clos, the New Urban Agenda encourages UN-Habitat and others to generate evidence-based and practical guidance for its implementation as well as the urban dimension of the SDGs. Parts of UN-Habitat have developed the AFINUA, in consultation with stakeholders and the UN Habitat III Task Team. This document establishes five drivers for transformational change as the basis for guidance implementation in countries. The AFINUA aims to set out the essential ingredients for the implementation of the New Urban

Agenda, who should lead each, how they might be measured and how they link to the provisions of the NUA. While local and regional governments have been consulted (through UCLG on behalf of the Global Taskforce) on this framework, it is expected to count with their partnership and support to contextualize AFINUA to the needs of specific countries and cities.

Additionally, Clos mentioned that the High Level Panel to Assess and Enhance Effectiveness of UN-Habitat will also participate at the Governing Council. This panel, appointed by the Secretary General by request of Member States, will conduct an independent assessment containing recommendations on enhancing the effectiveness, efficiency, accountability and oversight of UN-Habitat. This report will serve as an input to a two-day High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly, convened by the President of the General Assembly during the 71<sup>st</sup> session, to discuss the effective implementation of the New Urban Agenda and the positioning of UN-Habitat in this regard. The panel is composed of eight members including Anne Hidalgo, Mayor of Paris (France) and Mpho Parks Tau, President of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and the South African Local Governments Association (SALGA).

## Session 5: Formal UNACLA meeting



After the adoption of the agenda, Diana Lopez, Head of Local Governments and Decentralization Unit of UN-Habitat presented the key points contained in the document “Strategic actions for UNACLA 2017 – 2019” for adoption.

The work of UNACLA during that period will complement the action of the Global Task Force and the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments with the objective of strengthening the exchange between local and regional governments and the UN system and member states. This exchange will include two levels: political dialogue and political influence. Among the dialogues to support the implementation of the NUA, it is proposed to advance on critical issues that are direct responsibility of local and regional governments, dialogues with member states about the national implementation and dialogues with the UN system, at both global and regional levels. Regarding the focus on political influence, the actions proposed want to channel inputs about ongoing UN system policy dialogue, processes and meetings regarding the local implementation of all global development agendas. The members approved the proposed strategic actions, for further reference, the complete document appears in the Annexes.

Following this approval, the Chairman opened the floor for events and communication opportunities within the international calendar. Ms. Mary Jane Ortega, Special Adviser of Citynet

presented an update about the strategies, lines of actions, contribution to SDGs Knowledge Sharing and latest news of this organization. Finally, Ms. Ortega extended an invitation to the members to participate in the upcoming Citynet congress 'Our City, Our Future: Sharing Local Solutions for Sustainable Development' that will take place in Colombo (Sri Lanka) on November 5 - 8<sup>th</sup> 2017.

Following the presentations, the Chairman gave the floor to the participants to comment on general issues. Several key messages emerged, including the following:

- The complementary role of UNACLA should be strengthened to translate the recommendations of the local government constituency into a language that can be easily incorporated by member states and the United Nations System.
- There was recognition regarding the renewed role and recent work done by UNACLA since its "new start". There was a general agreement about the coherence between UCLG as its founding member and UNACLA action and about the importance for UNACLA to support the work of the Global Taskforce and WALRG following the processes opened during Habitat III. .
- Several speakers acknowledged that the role of UNACLA is critical to strengthen fruitful and dialogue between local, regional and other territorial governments and the UN System in relation to key issues that will have a significant impact on the successful implementation of the New Urban Agenda within the framework of the SDGs.
- The specific proposed Dialogues between Mayors and Ministers to improve national strategies were celebrated. These activities were identified as good platforms to promote political and substantive inputs on the fundamental drivers of change towards sustainable development that lead to concrete commitments for action by both national and local governments. The role of UNACLA as facilitator of such spaces was encouraged.
- Specific comments were done regarding the Asia Pacific region where support was requested in strengthening local governments' capacities, women's participation in local politics and affairs and on the creation of National Local Governments Associations.
- Suggestions were made to address advocacy efforts to different key international players as ASEAN or BRICS.
- It would be important to provide inputs to the High Level Panel on the Assessment of UN Habitat and to be involved in the High Level Days to be called by the President of the General Assembly in August.

The meeting concluded with the final remarks of both Joan Clos from UN-Habitat and Mayor Kadir Topbaş, Chairman of UNACLA. The session concluded with a video presented by the Municipality of Istanbul.

## ANNEXES

1. UNACLA Istanbul meeting concept note
2. Agenda
3. List of participants
4. UNACLA strategic actions for 2017-2019
5. UNACLA report of activities 2015 - 2016
6. New Urban Agenda, Selection of articles of interest for local and regional governments

