



Commonwealth Local Government Conference

Developmental local government:
Putting local government at the heart of development

14-17 May 2013 Kampala, Uganda

Local government's role in the post-2015 development agenda

Six hundred local government representatives, including ministers of local government, local government leaders, senior officials, academics and representatives of civil society, the private sector, international and development partner organisations, met at the Commonwealth Local Government Conference: *Developmental Local government: putting local government at the heart of development*, Kampala, May 2013, and emphasised that the voice of local government must be heard in shaping the post-2015 global development agenda.

They recalled the progress made to date in achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and discussion about the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and that much can still be done in the remaining two years, including at the local level. They welcomed the growing recognition and acknowledgement of the role for local government in development, including the outcomes of the UN Global Forum, the Busan Partnership, Rio+20 and the European Communication on Local Authorities and the preparation for Habitat III. They endorsed the Communique of the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments for post-2015 and Habitat III: *The local and Regional Governments' Development Agenda*, Istanbul, March 2013; and called for one global development agenda recognising the role of local government as a key stakeholder in poverty reduction and development to address poverty and sustainable development. They agreed that the global post-2015 development agenda should relate to both developed and developing countries.

1. Local government: a key stakeholder in development

Local government is a key part of the state and draws its mandate from its local democratic accountability. Local government works at the front line, is closest to the people and can therefore identify and respond to development needs and gaps. It has a range and reach of functional responsibilities, including strategic planning and service delivery, as well as legal and moral legitimacy, and should be recognised as a key stakeholder in development.

Participation in national planning processes, national committees or similar mechanisms, bringing together local governments, national associations of local government and other relevant national stakeholders in development are key to facilitating dialogue between local and central government to ensure participation in the laws and policies that relate to the local level and can contribute to the good governance of the post-2015 process.

Good governance is fundamental to the credible role and voice of local government in shaping and implementing the post-2015 development agenda. Principles of participation in decision making, service delivery and budgeting, transparency, accountability, and inclusion must underpin local government's meaningful role in development.

2. Role of local government in post-2015 – key thematic areas for local government

Local government has a central role in ensuring democratic values, basic service delivery, economic growth, resilience, wealth creation and employment generation through local economic development, promoting inclusive development and addressing inequalities, promoting environmental sustainability, protecting local environmental resources, climate change adaptation and mitigation, food security, and managing fragile and conflict/post-conflict environments.

Rapid urbanisation presents opportunities for growth and development. Good urban governance and planning, with a strong focus on local economic growth and development is essential. Where appropriate, local government should have the legal responsibility to design, manage and implement urban planning.

Local governments are agents of change and innovation, and new global development targets should be flexible enough to be localised, so that planning and delivery can be aligned at the local, national and global level. Local governments are well placed to play a role in defining and monitoring local targets in their communities, and should also be part of the monitoring systems at the national level. In this regard it will be important to establish solid baseline data and benchmarking which properly reflects recent progress by local governments towards achieving the MDGs. Good intergovernmental processes involving, where appropriate, an oversight role by national ministries, are essential.



3. Priorities to enable local government to play a full role in development and to implement post-2015 targets

To enable local government to contribute fully to the new global development agenda, emphasis should be placed on:

- ensuring a clear legal mandate for the role and functions of local government. Decentralisation of responsibilities to local government must be accompanied by the requisite financial resources (transfers from central government, access to own-source revenue and other finance mechanisms), technical and human capacity;
- removing the barriers to decentralisation to promote a bottom-up approach, which should include building local skills, staff and leadership capacity, which should reach out to the large population beyond the formal and informal sector, to boost the achievement of localised targets and goals;
- building and sustaining strong partnerships with other spheres of government, civil society, the private sector, traditional leaders, young people, women, marginalised and vulnerable groups to ensure effective, coordinated and sustainable local development;
- ensuring that development partners continue their support to strengthen local government and decentralisation, and that local government has direct access to development funding: decentralised cooperation among local governments and associations is a key mechanism to strengthen the capacities of local government;
- continuing to build the global partnership of local, regional and international local government organisations, development partners and multi-lateral institutions to advocate strongly with local and national stakeholders in support of local government's role in the post-2015 global development agenda;
- recommending that local government should advocate to their national delegations at the UN and elsewhere to ensure recognition of local government's role in shaping the post-2015 development agenda and implementing the targets which are agreed;

CLGF should take forward the recommendations of the consultations to the forthcoming Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Colombo, November 2013 and to work with the Commonwealth Secretariat, UNDP and the Global Taskforce to ensure that the voice of local government is reflected in the UN General Assembly process.

Appreciation was expressed to the Rt Hon Helen Clark and UNDP for their support for and participation in the Kampala consultation on the post-2015 development agenda.