

Fifth Local and Regional Governments Forum

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

As President of the Congress, representing some 130 000 local and regional authorities over Europe, I can say that we strongly believe that localising the SDGs is key to achieving the 2030 Agenda.

Over two thirds of the SDG targets, which our national governments committed to, can only be implemented at the local or regional level.

This is why national governments are wise if they give cities, towns and regions the responsibility and resources to act, the skills and tools to ensure concrete achievement, and the voice to share their experience.

In the Congress, we advocate for engaging local and regional authorities in the design and implementation of national action plans on SDGs and for their contribution to Voluntary National Reviews.

Local and regional authorities must be included in policy making and in legislative processes in a structured, regular consultation with central governments and parliaments.

All levels of governance, in interaction with the relevant local, regional and national associations, have their respective roles to play.

The Congress is currently preparing an Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government, which, for the time-being, does not explicitly mention the right to a sustainable environment.

What we aim at is a “green reading” of the Charter, so to say an interpretation of its provisions from the angle of environmental protection, as well as the strengthening of the position of local and regional authorities – vis-à-vis State authorities – in decision-making on environmental matters.

Local and regional authorities can and must share their valuable experience with national governments, and they must also be represented in national delegations during VNRs.

In Europe, we are encouraged to see many national associations of local and regional authorities actively involved in organising Voluntary Subnational Reviews as a tangible contribution to VNRs, and networking to share experiences and good practices.

In Germany and Italy, for example, national associations set up portals with city-level indicators to measure SDG implementation.

Such tools help local governments understand where they stand, but also what more they can do.

A good example is also the Norwegian 'whole of government' approach, where KS, the Norwegian Association of Local and Regional Authorities conducts a Voluntary Subnational Review and participates in the preparation of the country's Voluntary National Review.

The importance of such practices must be recognised nationally and internationally and be promoted.

And we believe that the 2023 SDG Summit could recommend making them desirable for all VNRs.

Having the voice of local and regional authorities heard during the High-Level Political Forum could also be strongly recommended.

We also believe that future policies at local and regional levels must be geared towards building resilience of our communities in the face of multiple crises we are facing.

By increasing the ability of towns and regions to prevent, resist and adapt to crises, as well as to rebuild quickly capacities, services and infrastructures impacted by these crisis, we will strengthen and sustain our action for SDG 11 Sustainable Cities and Communities and Agenda 2030 overall.

Thank you for your attention.