**CONGRÈS DES POUVOIRS LOCAUX ET RÉGIONAUX DE L'EUROPE**
**CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES OF EUROPE**

COUNCIL  CONSEIL
OF EUROPE  DE L'EUROPE

Strasbourg, 14 February 2002

CG (8) 26 prov.
Part II
**Provisional version**

## EIGHTH SESSION

## Rio+10: Towards the next World Summit on Sustainable Development

### Rapporteur : Mr Keith WHITMORE (United Kingdom)

### PRELIMINARY EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

**Report to be examined by the Committee on Sustainable Development on 20 March 2002 with the view to its transmission for examination and adoption by the Members of the Standing Committee to the Mini-Session of the Congress on 21 March 2002.**

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# Contents

*This document is based on  the Local Government Dialogue Paper, prepared by ICLEI, and the policy statement of the European Local Government Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development*

## *1. INTRODUCTION*

**Background**
In preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) is facilitating the worldwide review of local government progress in implementing *Agenda 21* and other Rio protocols. This preparatory process has included extensive regional and, where appropriate, sub-regional consultations with local government leaders and technical experts (September 2000 to December 2001); a worldwide Local Agenda 21 (LA21) survey of local authorities and their associations evaluating the extent of the implementation of LA21 plans; and an International Think Tank Meeting held in June 2001, in Stavanger, Norway, which brought together regional and global experts.

The *European Local Government Preparatory Committee for the WSSD in Johannesburg 2002,* at their meeting in London on 21-22 September 2001, reviewed the progress achieved in implementing Agenda 21 at the European Local Government level and have identified strategies and opportunities for an accelerated implementation of local sustainability in Europe. These are laid down in the European Local Government Policy Statement.

The key finding of the review process is that significant movement toward sustainability has occurred at the local level. Local governments have demonstrated their commitment to achieving sustainable development through "Local Agenda 21," the role assigned to them in Chapter 28 and reaffirmed by the 1996 Habitat II Conference and the 1997 "Rio+5" Special Session of the UN General Assembly. Advances in sustainability have been made through good governance and changes in the daily functions of local government in natural resource management, urban development, waste management, public health promotion, social services, and educational activities. Local governments have developed partnerships with Major Groups and other governments to accelerate sustainability and support programs and policies facilitating the implementation of the Conventions on Climate Change, Biodiversity, and Desertification, and other UN strategies.

Local governments can make a substantial contribution to national sustainability strategies. As such, national governments are asked to consult actively with their local government counterparts in preparation for the WSSD, incorporate local initiatives into national reports, and include local government representatives on national delegations to the Summit.

**The role of local government in realising sustainable development**
Over the past ten years, local governments have built on their inherent strengths to become champions and facilitators of sustainable development. This success is due to their position as the sphere of government closest to the people and best able to enhance both efficiency and democratic accountability. Local governments have developed participatory, multi-stakeholder strategies to implement sustainable development.

They have promoted good local governance involving the recognition of:

- the importance of transparency, accountability, and participation in governance;
- the critical role of integration in breaking down the compartmentalisation of policy-making and program delivery within and between governments;
- the need to engage in strategic partnerships which bring diverse perspectives to the table; and,
- the central role that information, knowledge, and capacity-building play in ensuring an informed and sustainable process.

This good local governance has enabled municipal government to facilitate partnerships and to respond to local needs in addressing the economic, social, and environmental challenges of sustainable development.

**Challenges for local sustainability**
Local government's understanding and implementation of sustainable development has evolved since 1992, now viewing sustainable development as more than an "environmental" movement. Priority local sustainable development issues also include poverty reduction, equity, social justice, and security.

The expanding scope of priorities for sustainable development must be seen in the context of several important processes - urbanisation, localisation, globalisation, and the evolution of governing institutions -, which have the potential to either impede or facilitate sustainable development at the local level.

In addressing these global trends, all spheres of government must work with Major Groups to resolve current local challenges. We must ameliorate non-supportive and inefficient government structures and institutional frameworks; enhance the legitimacy of local governance structures; resolve jurisdictional conflicts and the compartmentalisation of government; reinforce rural-urban linkages; address the concentration of economic power; increase local government access to resources; improve the management of resources; build commitment and leadership for sustainability; more effectively communicate the necessity of global sustainability; and, most importantly, deal with the underlying causes of unsustainability inherent in the way we produce, market, and consume.

**Key message: Local action moves the world**
Local governments can provide good governance and respond to the needs of their communities, thus creating a positive, cumulative effect on global environmental, economic, and social conditions despite jurisdictional and other barriers which continue to hamper sustainable development efforts. Local governments need to be key components of national sustainable development strategies if such plans are to succeed.

Local government contends that sufficient, coordinated action has not yet taken place. Effective sustainability must alter our priorities, our mode of governance, and indeed progress as a species. We have had a decade of learning and analysis that has resulted in a greater

understanding of sustainable development. We have agreed on visions and goals for sustainable development. Now, we need to proceed from *agenda to action*.

## *2. PRIORITIES FOR LOCAL SUSTAINABILITY*

**Issues to be addressed**
Local governments have identified three priority issues for sustainable development - poverty and inequity, insecurity, and environmental degradation - which remain substantially unchanged since 1992. Local efforts to implement sustainable development in the intervening decade have highlighted the critical importance of addressing these issues simultaneously using holistic and integrated solutions that also are responsive to specific local contexts. Future initiatives must place greater emphasis on addressing the social and economic problems that underlie environmental degradation, monitor implementation of initiatives, and include long-term plans to prevent and mitigate potential disasters.

Addressing poverty and inequity, their increasing prevalence and the growing gap between rich and poor within countries and between the developed and developing worlds, is integral to achieving sustainable development. Billions live without secure access to the necessities of life, in poor health, without adequate housing, access to fresh water, sanitation, or other basic services. The inherent insecurity of their material existence encourages trading off long-term sustainability to meet immediate daily requirements. Many of our world's poorest citizens live in environmentally sensitive areas, which are also experiencing some of the most significant population growth, and which are in danger of irremediable damage. Desertification, deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and other major environmental changes will result in even greater poverty in the future as those with the fewest resources lose what meagre means they currently possess while the privileged few continue to appropriate an ever greater proportion of the world's resources.

Insecurity stems not only from insufficient economic resources but also from the threat of natural and human generated environmental disasters, unstable political systems, and the threat of crime and war. Conflict, often rooted in the control of resources, contributes to environmental degradation by promoting the unsustainable use and destruction of natural resources and encouraging large_ scale population movements, thereby jeopardising eco-systems outside the immediate area of conflict. Currently few mechanisms are available to facilitate former foes learning to live together again, respecting both the environment and fellow citizens. The long-term approach to development necessary for sustainability requires security of person, home, and country.

Over the past decade, human actions have intensified environmental degradation. The growing toxicity and ongoing destruction of our ecosystems contribute to increased poverty and insecurity, particularly among the most disadvantaged, who are also those least able to plan for or mitigate environmental change. Sustainable development initiatives to address environmental protection must necessarily provide for a more secure future for all citizens, especially those with the fewest resources. Only when people are secure in their basic needs can they be expected to embrace the forward-looking policies necessary to achieve a harmonious balance between human needs and the environment.

**Changing contexts**
Several long term trends - urbanisation, localisation, globalisation, and the evolution of governing institutions - will influence the ability of all spheres of government to address the priority issues for achieving sustainable development in the next decade. These trends can either hinder or facilitate sustainability depending on the nature of governmental action. The impact of these trends is beyond the control of any one government and will require improved coordination and cooperation between and within spheres of government and global institutions.

Urbanisation is an irreversible trend in the modern world. Nearly half the world's population currently resides in cities and towns, with absolute and relative numbers of urban dwellers predicted to increase in the next decades. Cities have enormous potential as economic and cultural centres, places of innovation, and sites for the efficient use and movement of resources and the encouragement of multi-stakeholder approaches to policy making. Cities also have the potential to magnify social, economic, and environmental problems, including poverty, inequality, high unemployment, declining services and infrastructure, traffic congestion, crime, violence, and ill health. Urban governments must expand their role in facilitating sustainability to meet the needs of their citizens within the context of local conditions.

The trend toward localisation can build society's capacity to address sustainability by facilitating government action that is tailored to the unique social, ecological, and economic conditions of each place. Localisation has been pursued through constitutional change, decentralisation, and the devolution of power, with a number of governments recognising the value of subsidiarity. While responsibility for the delivery of services is being funnelled to local governments, the authority and resources required to effectively meet the needs of citizens often is not.

At the other end of the spectrum, globalisation will continue to affect local initiatives for sustainability. The increased cooperation, liberalisation of trade, and movement of capital resulting from globalisation can support sustainability by encouraging more efficient use and movement of resources, enhancing access to information, and facilitating the management of development issues across traditional jurisdictional boundaries. However, globalisation offers significant challenges for sustainability, including the potential to destabilise or ignore governments, shift global power centres, reduce cultural diversity, and overwhelm official development assistance. Thus, globalisation must be steered to symmetrically enhance the public, private, and civic good, including a more equitable distribution of wealth.

The trend toward globalisation has significantly altered the evolution of governing institutions. The past decade has been marked by increasing empowerment of non-elected multilateral bodies like the World Trade Organisation and the increasing privatisation of public services. Policy-making is shifting away from citizens and the public good. The credibility of the international community is at risk as poverty and inequity deepen and expand. By contrast, local governments have achieved widespread success in making government more inclusive by encouraging representation from and consultation with women, the poor, youth, and other marginalized groups. Gains at the local level are being undermined by multinational bodies making macro-level decisions affecting local conditions.

## *3. PROGRESS ACHIEVED*

Overall global response to *Agenda 21* has been inconsistent and inadequate. Local governments have responded strongly and are implementing LA21 as a strategic tool for conserving and managing local environments (Chapters 9-22 of Agenda 21) and fostering good governance (Chapters 24-32 of Agenda 21). Local governments are creating management structures that will permit an integrated approach toward sustainability and have begun implementing sustainable development policies in their areas of jurisdiction, including transport, water, land, and waste management. They have come to recognise the importance of information-sharing, enhanced roles for civil society and other partners, and a participatory and integrated approach to the incremental implementation of sustainability. Through this practical experience, local governments have found that sustainability makes social, economic, and environmental sense.

**Proliferation of Local Agendas 21**
Local governments have responded actively to *Agenda 21*, particularly Chapter 28, through the widespread adoption of Local Agendas 21. Since 1992, more than 6,200 local governments in over 100 countries have established LA21 planning processes. The World Health Organisation's Healthy Cities Program, which has goals similar to LA21, now involves more than 1,500 municipalities.

LA21 processes have been instrumental in enabling local governments to enhance local good governance. They have facilitated the involvement of Major Groups, including women, youth, indigenous peoples, NGOs, workers and trade unions, the private sector, and other local stakeholders, in local decision-making structures. Over 70 percent of local governments with LA21 strategies in place solicit multi-stakeholder input, with the most inclusive processes occurring in least developed countries. Through LA21 processes, local governments have established formal partnerships with Major Groups, ethnic minorities, community-based groups, the education sector, research and scientific institutions, the media, professional associations, international agencies, national governments, and other local governments to accelerate sustainability.

Local government planning processes aimed at sustainability in developed nations often embody many LA21 public participation principles, even if they are not deemed as such. In Japan, 109 local governments have LA21 strategies and many others address environmental issues with similar participatory approaches. In Western Europe, new multi-stakeholder mechanisms are being implemented. Some 1,300 European local authorities, representing over 100 million citizens, have joined the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign committing themselves to engaging in LA21 processes. All Swedish municipalities and over 90 percent of local governments in the United Kingdom have adopted LA21 strategies. In Australia, 177 local governments have adopted LA21 or similar sustainability strategies.

Local governments dealing with complex political and economic transformations have also begun to embrace LA21 processes. Nearly 100 local governments in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, and Russia have adopted LA21 plans. The trend toward the decentralisation of decision- making authority from national to local levels in the Asia-Pacific region has led to expansion of LA21 processes in China, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines,

Malaysia, Vietnam, and Korea. In Korea alone, over 170 local authorities have established LA21 plans.

In Latin America, LA21 has been a vehicle to promote equality and democracy in local government. Brazilian LA21 processes have resulted in local governments introducing participatory budgeting and Peruvian local governments are advocating links between LA21 processes and ongoing decentralisation in their country.

Local Agenda 21 activities are entering a more mature phase of implementation in many countries. They provide a concrete framework for future success, particularly in facilitating dialogue on multisectoral responses to sustainability. The biggest challenge in the years ahead will be to maintain the momentum that was generated immediately after the Earth Summit and to support local governments as they implement their sustainable development plans.

**Climate protection**
Ten years after the Rio Earth Summit launched the Framework Convention on Climate Change (FCCC), and five years after nations committed to emissions reduction targets in Kyoto, national governments continue to struggle to reduce their greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and mitigate the threat posed by global climate change. In contrast, many local governments have succeeded in reducing GHG emissions, improving local air quality, increasing sustainable transportation and efficient energy use, and consequently strengthening their economies. Local government leaders also have been active advocates of the local implementation of the Kyoto mechanisms and have attended all of the Conference of Party meetings, speaking at side events and presenting at official plenary sessions.

Local governments have reduced emissions by influencing energy use and, consequently, the production of GHG emissions within their jurisdictions. Municipal facilities have been retrofitted for energy efficiency and equipped with power-saving technologies. Comprehensive, city-wide strategies for climate protection include recovering methane gas at landfills, reducing waste going to landfill by instituting recycling programs, and providing alternatives to single passenger vehicle use and the unsustainable movement of goods. Increasing energy efficiency and reducing fossil fuel consumption result in better air quality, financial savings and improved community liveability.

The 500 members of the ICLEI Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) Campaign, which account for approximately 8 percent of global GHG emissions, work to cut local emissions and improve air quality. In the United States, CCP local governments are already eliminating over 9.4 million tonnes of equivalent carbon dioxide (eCO2) emissions per year, and saving more than USD$70 million in reduced energy and fuel expenditures. The Australian CCP Campaign, supported by a strong national commitment, includes 144 local governments, representing over 58 percent of the country's population. Measures implemented by Australian CCP local governments collectively reduced CO2 emissions by 78,000 tonnes in 2000-2001 and anticipate a reduction of 184,500 tonnes in 2002. They have invested over AUD$32 million in GHG abatement actions since 1999. In Europe, 100 local authorities have joined the CCP Campaign, some governments support national CCP programs, and the European Climate Alliance, a network of 850 local governments and Amazonian rainforest peoples, is designing and implementing local climate protection plans and preserving tropical rainforest by halving their GHG emissions and abstaining from the use of tropical timber.

After the 1997 Kyoto Conference of Parties, the Japanese national government passed a law recommending all local authorities prepare and implement climate protection plans.

Cities in developing countries must balance GHG emission reduction and air quality improvements with the need to develop municipal infrastructure to serve their citizens. Recently cities in India, Indonesia, Mexico, the Philippines, South Africa, Argentina, Brazil, and Chile have begun incorporating climate protection into municipal activities. These cities are working with the CCP Campaign to improve the efficiency of infrastructure and service delivery with methods that also improve energy efficiency and lower GHG emissions. Many of these cities are also incorporating climate protection in the construction of new housing by designing houses to maximise energy efficiency and locating them convenient to existing transportation services.

Future gains may be realised through the Clean Development Mechanism, adopted as part of the Kyoto Protocol to the FCCC.

**Sustainable water use and waste management**
Local governments have made improvements in fresh water and solid waste management (Chapters 17-22 of *Agenda 21*) since 1992. These sectors have been the targets of increased local government commitment and investment since 1992. Local governments have pursued inter-municipal cooperation through the formation of cooperative associations to more efficiently manage public utilities. They have established a Local Government Water Code setting out principles for the responsible, sustainable use and management of fresh water. The 2001 Bonn International Conference on Freshwater recognised the crucial role of local government in the effective management of water resources.

Local governments have achieved some success in improving water management. Implementation of LA21 initiatives in the developing world has resulted in significant improvements in water quality and supply.9 Water strategies worldwide are often pursued in conjunction with improved waste management and treatment. Initiatives include implementing regulatory and incentive mechanisms, such as pollution charges, to encourage sustainability; eco-procurement; facilitating the implementation of green technologies; public education; implementing of groundwater and surface water protection plans; and forging local government - community partnerships to access new water sources and improve water delivery services.

Local governments, particularly in the developed world, report significant progress in waste reduction.11 Household recycling programs and the diversion of solid waste to composting and materials recovery facilities have resulted in waste reduction. Comprehensive, integrated strategies have achieved as much as a 70 percent reduction in residential waste going to landfill. In the developing world, waste reduction initiatives include improving the social and economic circumstances of waste workers, education programs, and investing to facilitate improved waste collection and recycling.

**Sustainable land use**
Local governments have made considerable new commitments and investments in promoting sustainable human settlements (Chapter 7 of *Agenda 21*) and protecting the natural environment (UN Conventions on Biodiversity and Desertification). There are many local

projects to protect habitats and species, replant forests, and encourage the movement from landscaped parks to meadows of native plant species. Local authorities are combating desertification through the encouragement of sustainable agricultural practices, programs to improve soil quality, and sound water management. Some have supported the creation of "eco-settlements" or "eco-housing" projects, incorporating green space, restoring the natural environment, and promoting energy efficiency and low water consumption.

Hundreds of cities are engaged in planning sustainable urban transport systems. Initiatives include integrated planning for pedestrians, cyclists, and public transport and minimising the need to move goods and people through thoughtful community planning and enabling telecommunications technologies. Comprehensive land-use planning to promote sustainability is not yet commonplace. Only 35 percent of LA21 plans have sustainable land use plans or initiatives to preserve biodiversity. Continuing efforts must address the impact of market forces on land use and will require enhanced partnerships between local governments, other spheres of government, and the private sector.

**Social development**
The success of LA21 in promoting good governance through improved accountability, transparency, and inclusiveness has enabled local governments to acknowledge the intimate relationship between environmental and socio-economic issues in the achievement of sustainability. Sustainability initiatives exist which address various socio-economic issues, including poverty alleviation, economic development, women's issues, family planning, and employment. Local governments report improvement on some fronts, notably in community empowerment and the recognition of women's issues, but progress related to the alleviation of poverty and inequity lags behind.

**European local government achievements**

Local Agenda 21
As a result of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, Chapter 28 of the international action programme Agenda 21 called upon Local Governments as a Major Group to seek consensus with all sectors of the community on the joint implementation of a Local Agenda 21 and local sustainable development plans world wide.

In 2000-2001, a European-wide research was carried out (LASALA, Local Authorities Self Assessment of LA21) that confirms also national research in different European countries. Based upon this evidence, we can make the following statements with respect to the progress achieved in implementing Agenda 21 on the local level in Europe:

Local Agenda 21 is now firmly established as a key element of the European sustainable development process and acts as the major driving force in supporting European Local Governments in sustainability projects and initiatives. LA 21 provides a context within which local government can contribute to local and global sustainability.

While recognising differences, European Local Governments have nonetheless undertaken considerable action to implement Chapter 28 of Agenda 21. This was done through self-commitments, policy measures, and partnerships between each other and with local

governments in other regions of the world and networks.

By signing the Charter of the European Cities & Towns Towards Sustainability (Aalborg Charter), more that 1300 European local governments have committed themselves to engage in LA21 or similar sustainable development processes since 1994 and have thereby joined the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign. In addition, European local governments have taken the Lisbon Action Plan (1996) for orientation and expressed the need for action in their Declarations of Turku, Sofia, Seville and The Hague. Finally, the Hannover Call of European Municipal Leaders at the Turn Of the 21st Century (2000) provided a political stocktaking of progress and a direction for further European local action. Today, more than 3000 European local governments are involved in a LA 21 or similar sustainable development processes. As a means to further support, the CEMR established in 1996 a network of national agenda 21 co-ordinators that acts as a platform for exchange, innovation and co-ordination across the European Union and the countries in Central and Eastern Europe.

European Local Governments are adopting "new forms of governance" in relation to their citizens and other stakeholders. These may take the form of an LA21 process or similar participatory approaches.

European Local Governments are also introducing a large number of eco-efficient management tools to assist their policy processes, such as Environmental Management Audit Systems and green procurement. Similarly, they are creating management structures that will permit an integrated approach towards local sustainability.

Among European Local Governments, there are numerous good practice and success cases to report on in each region of Europe. Many efforts have been dedicated to the development of sustainability indicators, also on the local level. It is especially encouraging to note actions taken by local governments in Central and Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States to catch up with LA21 or other local sustainability processes.

UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UN FCC 1992)
European Local Governments have adopted successful policies and implemented concrete measures to achieve quantifiable reductions in local greenhouse gas emissions, improve air quality, and enhance liveability.

Among existing European initiatives, to date 131 local governments in 18 countries of the European Union and countries of Central and Eastern Europe have joined the ICLEI's Cities for Climate Protection (CCP) Campaign, a worldwide movement of over 470 local governments. In addition, national CCP campaigns have been established in Italy, Finland and the United Kingdom. The CCP campaign offers a strategic framework and tools for European Local Governments to quantify their emissions, to set reduction targets and to implement and monitor these targets. The average self-commitment of a European CCP Campaign participant is to set a 20% reduction target compared to base year emissions, which should be reached over a period of 10-20 years.

European local governments are also involved in other climate protection and sustainable energy programmes that are promoted by European networks of local government, such as Climate Alliance and Energie-Cités.

UN Framework Convention to Combat Desertification (1994)
European Local Governments have considered the necessity to combat desertification and recognise that desertification relates to poverty, bio-diversity, climate change and the sustainable use of natural resources.

Two World Forums of Mayors (Rome, 1997 & Bonn 1999) have been convened in Europe specifically to consider issues relating to Cities and Desertification. As a result, the Cities Against Desertification (CAD) Programme was approved at the second World Forum of Mayors. The CAD Programme aims to support local authorities and to strengthen the implementation of Agenda 21 at the local level (notably Chapters 12 and 28) in conjunction with the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. European Local Governments have yet to implement the CAD Programme.

Chapter 11 Combating Deforestation and the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (1993)
European Local Governments contributed via various national and EU driven programmes to assist the implementation of this Action programme and Convention. However little validated information is available on the status of implementation on the whole.

## *4. BARRIERS*

Individual local government successes abound. The decade has been marked by local commitment and pioneering action. However, these best practices have not been replicated, expanded or become commonplace because of systemic challenges and barriers to change. We must identify and focus attention on these inhibitors to success.

**Government structures, capacity and institutional frameworks**
The trend toward decentralisation over the last decade reflects the acceptance by many national and sub-national governments of the effectiveness of local action. Yet, paradoxically, local governments often are delegated responsibility for the provision of services without the constitutional and legislative authority or access to resources necessary to properly undertake their new roles. These limitations inhibit the flexibility and innovation required to achieve sustainability and the expansion of good governance practices, increased efficiency, and greater equity. The small scale of some local governments and their tendency to work in conjunction with few, if any, other local governments can impede the acquisition and sharing of information and best practices and reduce opportunities for building capacity for local implementation of *Agenda 21*.

**Legitimacy in governance**
Governments cannot hope to achieve sustainability without the active and willing participation of their citizens and their trust that government is acting for their best interests. Good governance has been held back by sceptical views of government, including a lack of accountability to constituents, insufficient involvement of citizens in the political process, inadequate representation of all stakeholder interests, insufficient transparency in the governing process, and corruption.

**Jurisdictional conflicts and the compartmentalisation of government**
Sustainable development policies must address social, economic, and environmental factors which regularly transcend existing jurisdictional boundaries. Insufficient clarity regarding legislative jurisdiction may result in inaction by all spheres of government on key issues, or in uncoordinated action where the policies of one sphere of government undermine the objectives of another. The division of responsibilities within a sphere of government can further complicate attempts at sustainability when departments and agencies with different responsibilities fail to work together or when neighbouring rural and urban local governments fail to coordinate planning. The lack of cooperation within and between spheres of government, both within nations and at the international level, inhibits the holistic planning necessary to address all factors in sustainability.

**Concentration of economic power**
The liberalisation and deregulation of trade and capital markets have shifted authority and influence from the public to the private sector. Within the private sector, the trend toward concentration of power continues at unprecedented speed. Thus the development and sustainability of economies and societies is increasingly determined by decisions of a decreasing number of economic power centres which are not democratically accountable.

**Allocation and management of resources**
Local governments lack sufficient financial and human resources to properly implement sustainability initiatives, particularly when capital investments are required. When funding is available, the lack of local control over stable funding sources, as opposed to grants from other spheres of government, results in short term programs rather than the long term planning necessary to address systemic problems. Furthermore, governments in some jurisdictions actually encourage environmental damage, distort trade, and heighten inequities through unsustainable subsidies and taxation policies. Existing management instruments are often inappropriate for effectively planning and controlling financial, human, and natural resources.

**Lack of political will**
Governments and their citizens have not placed enough emphasis on sustainability. Sufficient political will can make sustainable development happen, yet there are few incentives to encourage leaders to champion sustainability. The relative brevity of electoral terms encourages the adoption of short term goals with immediate results over long range planning for sustainability where the benefits will not be visible for years. Potential leaders in government, public administration, and the community are not being recognised for, or fostered in, their support of and work on sustainability.

**Communicating sustainable development**
Sustainable development as a concept transcends cultural differences and addresses social, economic and environmental issues simultaneously, yet it is still perceived as an environmental movement with northern, middle-class objectives. This is in part due to the sporadic and incipient nature of many sustainable development projects. Many initiatives have not yet achieved long term improvements for diverse groups which will generate widespread support and momentum for sustainability.

**Production and consumption patterns**

Cultural norms that equate increased consumption with success are unsustainable in a world with finite resources and an expanding population. The appropriation of cheap labour and resources from developing countries to meet the ever expanding cycle of supply and demand on which the economies of developed nations - and increasingly also of developing nations – are based deepen global inequities and environmental degradation.

**Overcoming barriers**

Local government is on the front line of service delivery. It must have adequate authority and resources to address context-specific priority issues. Sustainability will most likely succeed through local application within the context of co-operating spheres of government, where each sphere has its own area of responsibility yet coordinates and cooperates with others. *Agenda 21* stresses greater integration of national and local policies and development plans; greater participation from civil society organisations; decentralised fiscal and administrative decision-making; and greater partnerships and cooperation between public and private sector organisations, and between different levels of government. The combined implementation of these strategies can enhance government efficiency, accountability and transparency. Local successes show that the application of these *Agenda 21* strategies can overcome these barriers.

## *5. OPPORTUNITIES AND STRATEGIES FOR THE NEXT DECADE*

**Involving citizens and other stakeholders**

Impressive gains have been made in nurturing a local dialogue for sustainability, and yet there is still way to go. European Local Governments must reach out to their citizens, also to those whose voice has not been heard until now, and other stakeholders. They must take the sustainability agenda beyond its 'normal' constituency of public sector and environmental NGOs and involve especially business whose participation and commitment is essential for local sustainable development to accelerate.

**Mainstreaming local sustainability**

During the last ten years, local implementation of Agenda 21 has effectively placed the concept of sustainable development on the policy agenda of European Local Governments. The next task must be to mainstream sustainability so that its principles permeate all aspects of local decision-making.

European Local Governments must develop a culture of institutional learning through which the ideas and concepts of sustainability become embedded in the institutional culture and approaches to new challenges.

In addition, European Local Governments need to renew internal structures and ways of working that reflect a holistic approach. This will involve eroding those professional and departmental barriers that compartmentalise decision-making. Innovative tools for an eco--efficient management are required.

**Institutional and economic framework for co-operation between all spheres of government**

Local sustainability has developed with differing levels of attention from national governments in Europe, and yet has proven to be an effective mechanism for securing change.

In order to accelerate the implementation of local sustainability, European Local Governments urge national and European spheres of government to enter into a dialogue for an institutional, legal and economic framework for sustainability. As an example, European Local Governments welcome the European Union Strategy for Sustainable Development but its implementation and periodic evaluation need to be carried out in cooperation with them.

It is crucial that the disparity between the rhetoric of sustainable development and day-to-day practice is eliminated in all the framework conditions that are set by national and European spheres of government, within which European Local Governments must operate.

In addition, the needs of European Local Government in Central Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States to catch up with LA 21 and sustainable development planning must be recognised in all national and European support and assistance programmes.

**Accelerating local sustainability**

There is growing awareness of the need for interdependent governance on all levels. An increased number of examples of participatory local governance, as well as numerous local initiatives reflect a local commitment to global responsibility.

These achievements need to be maintained and accelerated within all regions of Europe, including the Newly Independent States, and to other regions of the world.

Strengthening local democracy is an essential prerequisite to meet the challenges of a globalised world. European Local Governments need to frame and advance sustainable livelihoods that are based on local knowledge and culture with an inclusive participation of citizens and other stakeholders. European Local Governments must provide necessary and innovative services for an enhanced quality of live that take into account economic, social, environmental and political justice. European Local governments must ensure an inspired, courageous, transparent and accountable leadership and be committed to the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

In parallel, European Local Governments must increase their networking with local governments in other regions of the world. European Local Governments should strive to achieve a proper Local Government outreach policy that reflects their global responsibility and that is based on decentralised co-operation, transfer of know how and exchange of experiences. In this way, European Local Government will also contribute to peace in other regions of the world.

## *6. CONCLUSIONS*

 In the decade since Rio, local governments have come to support the principles of sustainability, equity, and security as imperative goals which must be implemented. Local governments, in partnership with other Major Groups, have taken the first successful steps to put these principles into action. Local government asks that all governments, organisations, and citizens also adopt these principles and move to make them a reality by implementing the strategies outlined in this paper.

Sustainability, equity and security can be achieved through a fundamental alteration of the values that shape and inform our lives. We must commit ourselves to living in harmony with our environment and with the fellow inhabitants of our planet, and ensure our decisions reflect the interests of the generations to come. An acceptance of the moral and material imperative of sustainability should inform all our decision-making processes, both individual and collective.

Therefore, we need actions, not just words, from all the people of the world to ensure that our planet remains hospitable to our existence. Those who have the greatest ability - in authority and resources - also have the greatest responsibility to act. Governments bear an especially heavy burden for action, as they are the guardians of the public good. Local government extends an offer of partnership for sustainability and asks fellow governments, other Major Groups, and citizens to embrace the call to action.

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