

Pre-meeting of the Regional Forum on Sustainable Development – 11th March 2021

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Check against delivery

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Roundtable – “Tools and instruments supporting urban recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and promoting the achievement of SDGs”

COVID19 is probably the major event of the decade. It deeply affects the organisation of our societies and will leave a long-lasting impact in all sectors and at all levels.

Local and regional governments have been especially affected. We mayors are waiting for the end of the pandemic to see what rubble this battle has left on the field. We can then understand what specific actions we must take for the recovery, because the local level is crucial for the achievement of ambitious goals, to “build forward better”, based on shared values such as democracy, equality, and sustainability.

Local authorities are on the frontline, so they know the situation on the ground best and are in closest contact with the citizens. **Not by chance the UN says that achieving two thirds of SDG targets depend on local and regional authorities.**

Strong multi-level cooperation between international, national and local governments is essential to best coordinate our responses to the crisis and move together towards our goals. **Implementing the SDGs must be a shared responsibility.**

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities has repeatedly underlined the importance of localising the SDGs.

The Covenant of Mayors supports its signatories developing Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans offering a robust and flexible framework for cities’ action towards 2050

CEMR’s multiannual strategy proposes a: *“strong local and regional governments playing an active role in handling the challenges that we are facing and ensuring resilience in the face of future threats”*.

Municipalities cannot do their part to achieve the SDGs without support from national governments. We need national strategies that reflect the needs of our local and regional governments, citizens and stakeholders. **Local and regional authorities need to be actively involved in these national strategies.** And we need **financial and human resources** to succeed.

Monitoring progress is essential to achieve the SDGs and Voluntary Local Reviews are a useful tool because reflect the realities on the ground, show what is working in the local communities and the progress toward target indicators, share best practices and allow us mayors to develop public policy.

For this, cities and municipalities need suitable tools for defining objectives and monitoring indicators.

Unfortunately, the UN and national indicators do not have enough focus to define the objectives at the city level. National statistical institutes work mostly on the implementation of values applicable at national level and, some regional, but not local.

Without the local level, the 2030 Agenda cannot be implemented. So it is necessary to provide the cities of the world with useful tools for localising SDGs, adapted to their local context, their needs and skills. It is essential to use a global language from the outset that allows implementation and continuous updates.

We should also avoid a situation where the push for local reporting creates a series of scientifically unsubstantiated indicators that do not relate to the UN indicators. This would lead to cities declaring achievement of objectives that do not integrate with national and international strategies and that distort the purpose of the 2030 Agenda to achieve the same results globally.

To date, there are two examples of portals that use city level indicators, which are based on data certified by experts recognized worldwide and which work in line with the UN and national governments: the German SDGs Indicators Portal for cities and the Italian SDGs Portal. They are an innovative example of support from National Associations of Local Authorities.

To conclude I would like to say that we can count on **international forums** that amplify the voices of local authorities in the monitoring of SDG implementation, and on institutions such as the **Congress**, that with its 150 000 European local and regional authorities, offers a platform where cities and regions can exchange best practices for implementing and monitoring the SDGs.