

**Local and Regional Governments Forum on the 2030 Agenda, United Nations
High-Level Political Forum 2023
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**Speech by Leendert VERBEEK (Netherlands, SOC/G/PD)
President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of
the Council of Europe**

“Harnessing high impact localization policies to accelerate the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through SDG 11 and towards the 2023 SDG Summit”

Dialogue 1 - SDG 11 as a key enabler for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda

(approximately 4.5 minutes / 514 words)

Dear Gunn-Marit,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is a great honour and pleasure for me to be back in New York at the Local and Regional Governments Forum. A lot has changed since last year and yet many challenges remain the same. We continue facing multiple crises—armed conflicts such as Russia’s war against Ukraine, migration and forced displacement, food and energy crises, climate change and the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. These challenges are testing our resolve, but also making us more committed to our values and beliefs. We must work on our ability to prevent and adapt to crises and work to make our cities more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, as set out in SDG11.

The Congress, as the voice of local and regional authorities at the Council of Europe and the guardian of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, sets the local and regional framework for the implementation of SDGs in all 46 Council of Europe members states, with a special emphasis on SDG 11. Creating sustainable communities is only possible if the other SDGs are also achieved in those communities.

With this in mind, the Congress adopted, during its last Session in March, a recommendation calling for accelerated localisation of SDGs and for greater involvement of local and regional authorities in implementing the Agenda 2030. In this recommendation, the Congress calls on

national governments to give local and regional authorities proper autonomy of action and proper means for achieving SDG targets in their communities. The Congress also calls for encouraging Voluntary Local and Sub-national Reviews and for engaging local and regional authorities in the design and implementation of National SDG Action Plans and Voluntary National Reviews.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The critical role of local and regional authorities and the urgent need to localise SDGs was also reflected in the joint Call for Action, signed by major European associations and institutions of local and regional authorities on the eve of the 4th Summit of the Council of Europe Heads of State and Government., which took place in May in Reykjavik, Iceland. The Summit Declaration clearly stresses the important role of local and regional leaders in upholding democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in their communities and commits to support the essential role of multi-level governance in delivering human rights and fundamental freedoms.

I think we can all be proud that our message has been heard and that the Draft Political Declaration to be adopted at the September SDG Summit commits to further localising SDGs, advancing integrated planning at local and sub-national levels, enhancing local partnerships for SDGs and engaging all relevant stakeholders. We are also very glad to see that the SDG Progress report of the UN Secretary General highlights that local action is a precondition for delivering the promise of the SDGs and that engagement with local governments leads to better Voluntary National Reviews.

It is our strong belief that local and regional authorities can and must lead the transformation towards the achievement of all SDGs and we must and will continue advocating for it.

Thank you very much for your attention.