



UNACLA

UNITED NATIONS ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

REPORT OF ACTIVITIES

2015 - 2018

Prepared by UNACLA Co-Secretariat



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INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA) was established in 1999 by the Governing Council Resolution 17/18 as **“an advisory body that would serve the purpose of strengthening the dialogue with local authorities from all over the world involved in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda”**. UNACLA was created in the aftermath of Habitat II (1996) to materialize the special relation of local authorities as “our closest partners” as stated in the Istanbul Declaration.

The Secretariat of UNACLA is co-hosted by UN-Habitat and UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments), the major association of local governments, globally.

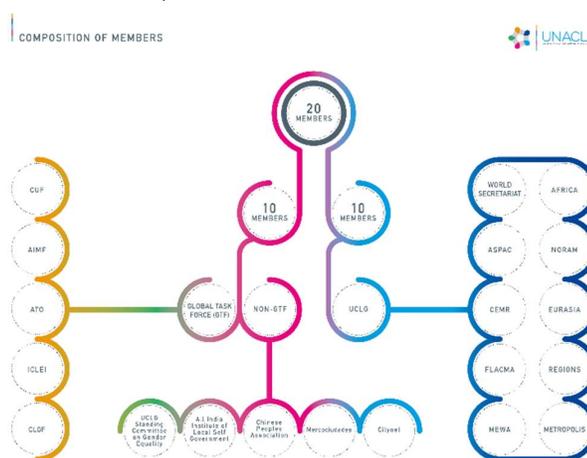
Purpose

The main purpose of UNACLA is to bring the local and regional voice and perspectives to the United Nations System, to increase awareness of their important role in achieving sustainable development, and to contribute to the implementation of the global development agendas within their local dimension.

Membership

UNACLA represents around 323.000 institutions at all levels, from small towns to intermediate cities, provinces to regions, authorities in small island states to big metropolises.

The Committee is composed of **20 members**, in which 10 members represent the metropolitan and regional sections of UCLG. The remaining 10 members are appointed within the membership of the Global Taskforce of local and regional governments and the other most representative networks that remain. The President of UNACLA is proposed by the UCLG World Secretariat, and is currently held by Mr Mpho Parks Tau, President of UCLG, Councillor in Johannesburg and President of the South Africa Association of Local Government (SALGA). UCLG was instrumental in the creation of UNACLA and plays a major role in bringing together the messages of local government networks as facilitator of the Global Taskforce of local and regional governments today.



UNACLA works in a representative manner, where the members deliver the messages that have been previously endorsed by their respective networks, that have democratic decision making mechanisms. Each of the 20 seats is now assigned to a local government network, in contrast with the previous *modus operandi* where individual Mayors were represented in their individual capacity. This new membership structure was approved by UNACLA in September 2015 to improve representation and decision making. In this capacity, UNACLA represents today approximately 323,000 institutions.

This new structure has been key to ensuring the presence of Mayors and political representatives in UNACLA. It is worth mentioning that all UNACLA members have to respond to their own governing structures, where decisions and messages are generated by consensus or by vote. In this way, the

Mayors or Governors sitting in UNACLA meetings no longer represent their own city or territory but instead represent all members of their own network.

UNACLA'S MISSION IN A RENEWED GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT ARCHITECTURE

UNACLA gathers the views and perspectives of local and regional governments and conveys them to the global discussion in an organized and representative method. It supports the dissemination of key messages to Member states and other partners through **advocacy and advisory work**. The primary role of UNACLA is to advise the Executive Director of UN-Habitat from the local government perspective, on all issues concerning the implementation of the Habitat Agenda and the SDGs. In line with the Global Agenda 2030 and the approval of the most recent global development agendas (such Addis Ababa, Paris and Quito) UNACLA has entered a new dynamic phase. During the last meeting of UNACLA in Istanbul, in April 2017, the following strategic actions were approved:

Foster the dialogue between national and local governments

The global agendas call for an increase in **dialogue amongst all levels of government** - local, regional and national - **to improve the necessary, enabling environment** that would allow each country to fulfill their global development commitments. UNACLA builds on the “International Guidelines on Decentralization and Strengthening of Local Authorities” (2007) as well as in the New Urban Agenda, particularly on the Art. 85 -92 (Urban governance structure). This dialogue between local and national governments should happen through a systematic and practical exchange on substantive issues, which will contribute to strengthening the role of local authorities in international development and the promotion of democratic governance. However, UNACLA is not and should not become a platform of exchange but it should play a greater role in the political preparation of the UN Habitat Governing Council, discussing upcoming topics well in advance and involving local governments in the development of the resolutions. Today, UNACLA **promotes good public governance and a fair distribution of resources and responsibilities**. **This helps** improve the capacity of local governments in order to contribute to fighting poverty and ensuring inclusion for all.

Art. 89 We will take measures to...ensure appropriate fiscal, political and administrative decentralization based on the principle of subsidiarity

New Urban Agenda, 2016.

Promote the local dimension of development in the global agendas

UNACLA works to ensure that the local dimension of development is present in all new global agendas. Many of the responsibilities regarding a number of global objectives are already in the hands of local governments. Local leadership and uniting local stakeholders, private and social, are essential for the global development agendas to become a reality at local level. UNACLA believes that the new development agendas cannot be possible without the establishment of wide local partnerships, under the leadership of local governments. UNACLA contributes **to the new approach to development that has been established by the SDGs**, leaving behind the sectorial approach and connecting the different goals and targets under the broader question of **local governance, effectiveness of the public sector and citizen's trust**. The promotion of the sustainable urbanization agenda before the UN System should become a political priority of UNACLA, including facilitating inputs of the constituency in the implementation of global development agendas including NUA.

Art. 76. We recognize that effective governance at the local, subnational, national, regional and global levels representing the voices and interests of all is critical for advancing sustainable development.

UNACLA **brings local government inputs to the global processes**, an essential step to ensure local implementation. UNACLA works to bring local voices and perspectives, as well as to create awareness within local and regional governments about the importance of the global agendas and how to implement them at local level.



Second World Assembly of local and regional governments, Quito, 16th October 2016

Bring the UN System closer to local and regional governments

With the approval of Agenda 2030, the UN System is working more and closely together, as the SDGs are multi-sectorial and touch different themes and departments, but they are also multi-level. To be achieved, Agenda 2030 will require the contribution of every stakeholders. Local governments will be key to implement the SDG as they have already responsibility over a majority of SDG targets and indicators. In the last years, the UN System has come closer to local governments and the local dimension of development is back to the priorities of sustainable development. UNACLA has been facilitating the connection between UNACLA members and the UN System in the past years.

UNACLA ACTIVITIES 2015 – 2018

A local voice in the UN

UNACLA has worked closely with the Global Taskforce of local and regional governments, hosted by United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), to ensure the presence of local and regional governments in many of the global events that now shape the recently approved global agendas. UNACLA supported local government delegations and contributed to create dialogue with the multilateral system, as well as member states. As such, UNACLA was involved in the following activities:

1. [Financing for Development Conference in Addis Ababa, 13 – 15th July 2015](#)

UN-Habitat, in coordination with UCLG and the United Nations Capital Development Fund supported the Delegation of 90 local government representatives to Addis, co-organized a total of five official side events and a one-day full side event on “Local financing for development: Innovation in municipal finance for inclusive growth” together with the African Union. One of the main outcomes for the local government constituency was the inclusion of Art. 34 in the final Addis Ababa Action Agenda

Art 34. We further acknowledge that expenditures and investments in sustainable development are being devolved to the subnational level. We therefore commit to scaling up international cooperation to strengthen capacities of municipalities and other local authorities. We will strive to support local governments in their efforts to mobilize revenues as appropriate.

Addis Ababa Action Plan, 2015.

2. [Habitat III process, 2015 - 2016](#)

UNACLA supported the organization of the second **World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments** that took place back to back with Habitat III conference, as noted by the General Assembly in its resolution A/RES/70/210 “in recognition of the role of local authorities and communities in sustainable urban development and in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda”.



The World Assembly held three sessions in 2016 (New York, 15th May, Bogota, 14th October and Quito, 16th October). During the Habitat III Conference, members endorsed the “[UNACLA Quito Declaration](#)” including recommendations and the local government vision for sustainable cities and territories for all. UNACLA also supported the local authorities’ hearings for Habitat III, in May 2016, at United Nations Headquarters in New York. During the same date, UNACLA members met in New York to approve the 2016 workplan including the creation of spaces of dialogue with member states, and approved the [UNACLA Statement on Habitat III zero draft](#).

Par. 169 We note the importance of continuing to engage in the follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda with subnational and local government associations represented at the World Assembly of local and regional governments.

New Urban Agenda, 2016

3. [Strategic meeting of UNACLA members, 24th April, Istanbul 2017](#)

UNACLA members met in Istanbul under the theme “The global development agendas, implications for local governments” and upon the invitation of Kadir Topbaş, Mayor of the Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality and current Chairman of UNACLA.



This meeting happened in a critical time when local governments and their associations face the challenge of involving their members in the local implementation of several global agendas, including the Development Agenda 2030 and the New Urban Agenda (NUA). It was an excellent opportunity for strategic thinking and fruitful exchange. It also provided inputs for the Local Government Delegation to the Governing Council of UN-Habitat that took place in Nairobi from 8 to 12th May 2017.



The meeting contributed to advance in the local implementation of the global development agendas and to further explore the real implications for local and regional governments and the role of UNACLA to support these processes. Thirty-five participants from 11 of the 20 UNACLA members were present in the event, that was key to approve the new strategic priorities for the 2017 – 2019 period.

4. Sustainable Cities Dialogue, Strasbourg, 24 – 25th May 2018

UNACLA co-organized the “Sustainable Cities Dialogue” that took place in Strasbourg within the framework of the UCLG Executive Bureau. The Dialogue brought representatives from 25 central governments to debate with Ministers and Mayors for the first time about joint implementation of Agenda 2030. The final report “Urban governance at the core of the implementation of SDG 11” informed the High Level Political Forum review of SDG 11 in 2018. This was the first time that central and local governments came together to address SDG 11 jointly in a global event. It was also the first time that central governments from different line Ministries were able to participate in a UCLG Executive Bureau. The participants exchanged views over the following themes: Right to the city and inclusive territories, opportunities for all, culture and city diplomacy, multi-level governance, resilience and linking the global goals with the New Urban Agenda implementation. The participant countries also had a moment to present their national reports on the implementation of SDG 11 with special focus on the role of local governments and the need to find new multi-level governance arrangements.



5. First local and regional government forum at the HLPF, 16th July 2018

UNACLA supported the first edition of the [Local and Regional Government Forum during HLPF in New York](#). The event was co-organized together with UNDESA and the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments. The meeting gathered 250 representatives from local and regional governments, present at HLPF for the first time the same day as member states of the UN started presenting their Voluntary National Reports (VNR). The debate showcase how cities are at the frontline of implementing the SDGs, including monitoring progress and aligning budgets and political priorities with those of Agenda 2030.



6. [Venice City Solutions 2030: Financing the SDGs at local level, Venice, 16-17th November 2018](#)

UNACLA also supported the organization of the Venice City Solutions – Financing the SDGs at the local level, that took place in Venice on November 2018. Co-organized by UN-Habitat, UNDP, UNCDF and UCLG with its Italian member, AICCRE. The event brought together representatives from 25 member states both at central and local level to discuss how funding Agenda 2030 at local level is key to achieve it globally. A side event to present the recommendations of the event will be organized during the HLPF in 2019.

The activity counted with a total of 36 participants from local or regional governments, 21 representatives from central governments, 20 local government networks, 2 from financial institutions, 2 from cooperation agencies, 8 partners or universities and 19 colleagues from the United Nations System.

The debate was organized around the following themes: National strategies for financing the achievement of the SDGs at local level; Measuring impact at local level: the importance of data on budget alignment and tracking indicators; City Solutions, how local governments are making the Agenda 2030 a reality at local level; Dynamic local economies to achieve the 2030 Agenda. Finally, participants were able to give their recommendations to the High Level Political Forum 2019, included in the [final report](#) of the activity.

7. UNACLA and the localizing of the Sustainable Development Goals (2014 – ongoing)

UNACLA has contributed to raise awareness among local and regional governments about the importance of global agendas for their daily work in improving the quality of life of their citizens. UNACLA was created to support the implementation of the 1996 Habitat Agenda. Today it supports the **localization of the global agendas to bring concrete and tangible outputs for the local and regional governments and the people they represent.** One of the main focuses of UNACLA is the Localization of the Sustainable Development Goals, as a big part of the Agenda 2030 needs to be achieved at local level. Local and regional governments are essential to implement the SDGs, but this won't be possible in the absence of an adequate legal framework; the necessary capacity, resources and local leadership.



The 'Localizing the SDGs' platform www.localizingthesdgs.org is a common effort by UN-Habitat, UNDP and the Global Taskforce of local and regional governments to support the local implementation of the SDGs and the fundamental role that local government need to play to drive the process. The platform is the result of the 2014 consultation on Means of Implementation of the post-2015 Agenda, as mandated by the United Nations Development Group, which informed the "Delivering the post 2015 development agenda: Opportunities at the national and local levels". UNACLA is ideally positioned to bridge **solutions and commitments from local governments to implement the SDGs**, as many are already allocated to them by the appropriate national legal framework.

The localization process wants to support local and regional governments in playing their full role in the achievement of the SDGs at local level and encourages local leaders to make the SDGs their own. Activities have included collecting and systematizing information about how local governments across the world are implementing the SDGs, that are public in the online platform that counts today with 31.000 registered users who connect from 3.300 different cities. Since year 2016 it has collected 412 documents, 244 stories and 291 events regarding the local implementation of Agenda 2030.

Additionally, the initiative has published two training modules to encourage local government across the world to use the SDG as a tool for better planning, inclusion and delivery of local public services. The initiative has also organized dialogues between central and local governments to establish national strategies to include local governments in the implementation of Agenda 2030.

MAIN ACHIEVEMENTS

The different gatherings of UNACLA throughout the past years have enabled to increase the level of participation and representation in the UNACLA membership. It is worth reminding that UNACLA members are not individual Mayors but representatives of the different local government networks.

UNACLA ensured the enhancement of dialogue with national governments, including at UCLG Executive Bureau in May 2018 and during the First edition of the HLPF Local and regional Governments Forum, with other UN bodies, through the Localizing SDGs platform, and in specific policy gatherings such as sustainable local financing.

In terms of communication, UNACLA produces a regular newsletter to keep all its members updated about activities, a new logo was designed back in 2016, the group counts with an updated webpage at www.unhabitat.org/unacla and a twitter account [@LocGovUN](https://twitter.com/LocGovUN)

In terms of visibility, UNACLA has worked closely with the Global Taskforce of local and regional governments to ensure the presence of local governments in the global agendas. It has also created opportunities for dialogue between local and regional governments. Finally, it has increased cooperation with the UN System and contribute to recognising the role of local and regional governments in the UN language.

Par 9. The New Urban Agenda reaffirms our global commitment to sustainable urban development as a critical step for realizing sustainable development in an integrated and coordinated manner at the global, regional, national, subnational and local levels, with the participation of all relevant actors.

New Urban Agenda

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