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Local and Regional Governments: Key Partners for the Global Gateway

Declaration of International Networks of Local and Regional Governments

Brussels, 10 December 2025

Preamble – Why local authorities matter for the Global Gateway

Local and regional governments (LRGs) are a **sphere of public governance** responsible for representing local communities and ensuring that local policies and delivery of services respond to the priorities and needs of citizens locally. Local authorities are recognised by the EU as distinct **actors for development**¹ and in recognition of that, five framework partnership agreements have been in place since 2015 between the EU and key international networks of local and regional governments.

LRGs have an important leadership role in creating **enabling conditions for local economic and social development**, managing essential affairs of their territories and ensuring that the benefits from investments reach all stakeholders. It is important therefore that Global Gateway (GG) investments work with and through local structures and processes to reinforce their development impact and sustainability.

National associations of local and regional governments play a crucial role in bringing local governments together, providing them with a strong and coordinated voice for engaging with national governments, delegations of the European Union, or international institutions. In the context of Global Gateway, national associations have significant potential as partners in sharing knowledge and rolling out innovations across LRGs in partner countries, building on decentralised cooperation partnerships.

As **international networks of local and regional governments**, signatories of Framework Partnership Agreements with the European Commission, we work jointly, in close cooperation with our members and counterparts in partner countries, to promote the engagement of LRGs in the planning and delivery of EU development policies. Through this declaration we aim to set out key recommendations to enhance the Global Gateway strategy, fostering partnerships with LRGs in partner countries, for increased impact.

Local and regional governments are key partners to unlock the impact of the Global Gateway, ensuring legitimacy and long-term sustainability of investments

Local and regional governments hold extensive remits linked to **Global Gateway thematic priority sectors**: digital connectivity, climate and energy, transport, health, as well as education and research. They ensure **policy coherence for development**, and effective alignment between investments with the needs of local populations.

Local and regional governments should be recognised as co-creators of an **enabling environment for sustainable investments**. They are key to identifying and convening local stakeholders such as investors, SMEs, CSOs, the education sector and the academia, so as to foster an inclusive and virtuous local dynamic, delivering on Global Gateway's objectives on the ground.

In most partner countries, local and regional governments are policy makers with a political and democratic mandate. As first ports of call to the citizens, they are accountable and help ensure the **legitimacy of the investments** on the ground. Involving LRGs in Global Gateway projects helps to ensure community awareness and acceptance of investments, and therefore their sustainability in the long-term, where LRGs play a key role as the missing link between investments and the citizens.

In **fragile and post-crisis** contexts, LRGs hold a unique role: often being the only functioning public institutions in fragile and conflict-affected areas, LRGs can mobilise diverse local stakeholders and deliver services directly to communities in need, making them indispensable partners in promoting stability, democracy, sustainable development and investments.

Key recommendations

1. **Engage with local authorities directly**, in support of Global Gateway investments. Local and regional governments need direct access to **funding mechanisms**, which should be tailored to their specificities – size, capacities, and competencies. This will allow them to fully play their part in the implementation of the Global Gateway strategy, and consistently add value across projects. This could be done through:
 - a. Dedicated calls for proposals and specific evaluation criteria under the Global Gateway Investment Hub.
 - b. Dedicated funding streams, such as the previous “*Partnerships for Sustainable Cities*” programme would empower LRGs to complement Global Gateway flagship projects with local actions and enhanced value chains.
 - c. Country level mechanisms for structured dialogue and inclusion of LRGs in the 360 degree Global Gateway.
2. **Provide guidance to Teams National and EU Delegations** to ensure that they systematically and meaningfully involve local authorities when assessing Global Gateway projects, in their planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.
3. **Support national associations of local and regional governments and their international networks** as key institutions that bring local governments together, facilitating horizontal transfer of know-how and best practices among them. International networks – signatories of Framework Partnership Agreements with the European Commission since 2015 – should be instrumental in coordinating the involvement, and capacity building for local authorities towards the Global Gateway across borders and worldwide.

Frédéric Vallier
General Delegate

International
Association of
Francophone Mayors
(AIMF)

Fabrizio Rossi
Secretary General

Council of European
Municipalities and
Regions (CEMR) -
PLATFORMA

Lucy Slack
Secretary General

Commonwealth
Local
Government
Forum (CLGF)

Emilia Sáiz
Secretary General

United Cities and
Local Governments
(UCLG)