

#HLPF2026 #Listen2Cities



JOINT STATEMENT TO THE 2026 HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

of the organized constituency
of local and regional governments

{ 100 }
days of local
multilateralism



STATEMENT OF THE GLOBAL TASKFORCE OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS AT THE 2026 HIGH-LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM

1. The 2026 High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) comes at a decisive moment for the 2030 Agenda and for the renewal of multilateralism.
2. We, local and regional governments (LRGs) and our associations from across the world, gathered within the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (GTF), reaffirm that the achievement of the SDGs depends on empowered local and regional governments, adequate financing, multilevel governance and structured participation in global decision-making.
3. With only four years left to deliver on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and as efforts to strengthen the United Nations system call for global governance to become more effective, inclusive and fit for purpose, the role of LRGs must move from recognition to institutional transformation. The 2026 HLPF should help secure the conditions for territorial delivery: multilevel governance, adequate financing, structured participation and democratic ownership from the ground up.
4. The SDGs under review at the 2026 HLPF — Goals 6, 7, 9, 11 and 17 — give concrete meaning to this renewal agenda. Water, sanitation, energy, infrastructure, housing, mobility and sustainable cities are deeply local and interconnected: they are planned, financed, maintained and experienced in cities and territories. Their transformation depends on governance that is place and rights-based, and rooted in universal access to local public services. Their delivery must also advance in coherence with the Paris Agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and the New Urban Agenda, so that multilevel governance is strengthened consistently across all global frameworks rather than negotiated anew in each.
5. Local and regional governments are institutions of proximity, care and democratic participation. They deliver and protect the everyday infrastructure that makes dignity, equality and trust tangible: not only the public services under review this year, but also health, education, care, culture, digital connectivity and public space.
6. Ten years of reporting on localization through the *Towards the Localization of the SDGs* report show that LRGs have shaped, delivered and monitored the 2030 Agenda through public services, territorial planning, infrastructure investment, democratic governance and community engagement. Echoing the UN Global Sustainable Development Reports' calls for integrated transformations, this evidence confirms localization as a political process, evolving from awareness-raising into a broader agenda grounded in multilevel cooperation, co-responsibility, and social justice.
7. Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) and Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs) are critical tools to connect territorial realities with national and global follow-up and review. Their findings should systematically inform VNRs, national SDG strategies and HLPF deliberations, supported by multilevel governance, adequate financing, strong data systems, and structured participation.

8. The Secretary-General's report A/79/968, mandated under Action 55(e) of the Pact for the Future, recognizes the central role of LRGs in advancing sustainable development and strengthening the multilateral system. The 2026 HLPF must help translate this recognition into institutional practice by strengthening the structured and structural participation of the local and regional government constituency in UN deliberations, implementation, follow-up and review, in the spirit of SDG 17 of governing in partnership.
9. Building on the Local SDG Rescue Plan, the Global Strategy of the Secretary-General's Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments, the Pact for the Future and the evidence gathered through a decade of reporting, our constituency calls for a renewed multilateralism that delivers through territories, recognizes the diversity of local, metropolitan and regional realities and governance frameworks, and connects action across spheres of government.
10. The 2026 HLPF must therefore help close the gap between political recognition and institutional practice. Localization must be understood not only as implementation, but as an accelerator and a way of renewing sustainable development governance from territories.

1. Reclaiming SDG 11 as the accelerator of the 2030 Agenda

Territorial equality and the Right to the City

11. In the year of the ten-year review of the New Urban Agenda, SDG 11 must be reaffirmed as a strategic accelerator and the territorial backbone of the 2030 Agenda and a political foundation for the post-2030 framework.
12. Fast-growing cities, intermediary cities, metropolitan areas, rural-urban territories and informal settlements face growing pressures linked to housing exclusion, infrastructure deficits, climate vulnerability and unequal access to services. These challenges require integrated urban and territorial policies rooted in rights, care, culture and democratic participation, supported by effective metropolitan and multilevel governance arrangements where challenges and service provision transcend administrative boundaries.
13. Housing justice sits at the centre of SDG 11. Access to adequate, safe and affordable housing is a human right and a foundation for dignity, care, resilience and belonging. It is also the entry point to a wider system of essential local public services and rights, including water and sanitation, energy, transport and mobility, health, education, culture, public space, community engagement and livelihoods.
14. The Baku Call to Action adopted at the Thirteenth Session of the World Urban Forum reinforces this approach by recognizing housing as a human right and calling for stronger multilevel governance, territorial finance and institutional conditions for local action.
15. Integrated urban and territorial planning must connect housing with land, infrastructure, food security, water, sanitation, energy, waste management, ecological transition and disaster risk reduction. It must also respond to the unequal conditions experienced by women, caregivers, migrants and refugees, older persons, children, persons with disabilities and historically marginalized communities.

16. The localization of the SDGs, including SDG11, cannot be achieved without culture. Cultural rights, heritage, diversity, creativity and community-led cultural initiatives contribute to social inclusion, public space revitalization, economic opportunities, climate adaptation and democratic participation. Recognizing culture as a driver and enabler of sustainable development, including through a stand-alone Culture Goal, is essential to building territories that are more equitable, resilient and connected to their communities.
17. **We, local and regional governments, commit** to making SDG 11 a driver of the transformations needed to achieve the 2030 Agenda. We will continue to advance housing justice, integrated territorial planning and universal local public services as foundations of territories that are more equal, resilient, democratic and rooted in human rights.

SDG 11 must be reclaimed as the territorial accelerator of the 2030 Agenda and a framework for housing justice, local public services and the Right to the City.

Local and Regional Governments Call for:

18. Recognizing SDG 11 as a strategic accelerator of the 2030 Agenda and a key framework for territorial equality and the Right to the City.
19. Advancing housing justice by recognizing adequate, safe and affordable housing as a human right, a public good and an entry point to essential local public services.
20. Connecting housing, mobility, food security, water, energy, sanitation, waste management, public space and climate resilience through integrated and participatory urban and territorial planning.
21. Empowering LRGs with the mandates, fiscal space and financing required to deliver universal, accessible and quality local public services and strengthening metropolitan and multilevel governance and interconnected planning at all levels.
22. Strengthening the role of LRGs in building inclusive, climate-resilient and disaster-prepared territories through locally led adaptation, risk prevention and the protection of vulnerable communities and ecosystems.
23. Investing in urban nature, nature-based solutions and ecosystem restoration as core urban infrastructure for adaptation, health and biodiversity, in line with the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and its Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity.
24. Recognizing culture, heritage, diversity and local identities as core dimensions of sustainable development and as drivers of social cohesion, democratic life and territorial belonging.

2. Delivering water, sanitation and energy justice through local public services

SDG 6: Water and sanitation as human rights and commons & SDG 7: A just and locally led energy transition

25. Water, sanitation and energy justice require public leadership, democratic accountability and financing that reaches the territories where services are delivered.
26. Water, sanitation and energy are essential local public services through which rights, dignity and equality become tangible in people's daily lives. Their delivery depends on local institutions with the mandates, resources and capacities to plan, finance, operate and maintain systems that respond to territorial realities.
27. Achieving SDG 6 requires accelerated local action to close service gaps, improve water quality, protect freshwater ecosystems and expand climate-resilient water, sanitation and hygiene systems. Persistent disparities in rural areas, rapidly growing cities, peri-urban territories and informal settlements show the urgency of addressing water and sanitation through integrated territorial approaches.
28. LRGs act as the bridge between national water policies, basin-level coordination and the needs of communities. They are central to wastewater treatment, pollution control, ecosystem restoration, drought and flood preparedness, and community participation in water governance. Water must be recognized as a vulnerable public commons requiring stewardship across uses, sectors and administrative boundaries.
29. The United Nations Water Conference later this year must recognize local and regional governments as indispensable actors in global water governance, with a central role in turning commitments on water and sanitation into rights-based, climate-resilient public services.
30. Achieving SDG 7 requires a just and locally led energy transition. Universal, affordable and clean energy underpins housing, health, education, mobility, digital connectivity and local economic opportunities. LRGs are already advancing renewable energy, energy efficiency, low-carbon mobility, building retrofits, clean public facilities and decentralized energy solutions.
31. Energy access and energy poverty are territorial challenges. National energy frameworks must recognize LRGs as energy transition actors and align mandates, regulation and financing to enable community-benefiting energy development. Building on the Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships (CHAMP), the new generation of Nationally Determined Contributions must reflect and enable local climate and energy action.
32. **We, local and regional governments, commit to** strengthening rights-based public service delivery for water, sanitation and energy, closing service gaps, protecting ecosystems, reducing energy poverty and advancing just, locally led transitions. We will continue to connect access, affordability, quality, accountability and resilience in the territories we serve.

Local and Regional Governments Call for:

33. Recognizing water, sanitation and energy as essential local public services, human rights and foundations of dignity, health, equality and territorial resilience.
34. Securing predictable finance, fiscal decentralization and enabling regulatory frameworks for local water, sanitation and energy systems, including operation, maintenance and long-term service quality.
35. Scaling up investment in climate-resilient water, sanitation and hygiene infrastructure, watershed protection, wastewater treatment and ecosystem restoration, especially in underserved and climate-vulnerable territories.
36. Advancing a just, locally led energy transition that reduces energy poverty and supports renewable energy, energy efficiency, low-carbon mobility, building retrofits, clean public facilities and decentralized energy solutions.
37. Implementing CHAMP commitments by embedding local and regional climate and energy action in Nationally Determined Contributions, national energy plans and climate finance frameworks, with structured multilevel cooperation on their design and delivery.
38. Ensuring structured LRG participation in national water and energy strategies, global water governance processes, climate finance mechanisms and transition planning.

3. Investing in resilient infrastructure, public value and territorial cohesion

SDG 9: Infrastructure and innovation for people and territories

39. Infrastructure and innovation must be treated as public value: the everyday systems and creative problem solving that connect people to rights, services, livelihoods, climate resilience and opportunity.
40. Sustainable development and territorial cohesion depend on quality, reliable, inclusive and climate-resilient infrastructure that serves public purpose. SDG 9 connects people to services, opportunities and decent livelihoods by aligning infrastructure investment, local public services, productive capacities and ecological transformation with community needs.
41. LRGs play a central role in planning, financing, operating and maintaining the systems through which communities access mobility, energy, water, housing, digital connectivity and public facilities. Their mandates shape the spatial distribution of infrastructure investment and the conditions under which local economic development, innovation and productive capacities can emerge.
42. Delivering SDG 9 requires infrastructure, industrial and innovation strategies that are shaped with territories and respond to how people live, move, work and access services. With their close knowledge of community needs, LRGs can test, adapt and scale solutions grounded in local realities. Productive transformation depends on local innovation ecosystems where infrastructure is planned, skills are built, services are delivered and economic opportunities emerge, including through structured city-business collaboration that aligns local private

sector investment and innovation with public priorities. National strategies must therefore support territorial ecosystems that connect investment, decent work, circular and low-carbon economies, care and local public services, while reducing territorial divides.

43. Accelerating the upgrading, rehabilitation and retrofitting of housing and settlements to improve adequacy, affordability, resilience, accessibility and environmental sustainability is a priority for resilient and inclusive territorial development. Public buildings, including social housing, schools, care facilities, markets and community spaces, require sustained investment to improve energy efficiency, accessibility, climate adaptation and resilience.
44. Digital public infrastructure also requires democratic governance. Connectivity and access to the internet should be recognized as public services and commons, while responsible data governance, open and interoperable systems and digital rights must guide digital transformation in the public interest.
45. **We, local and regional governments, commit to** advancing infrastructure that serves people, territories and public value. We will continue to connect infrastructure investment with local public services, decent work, climate resilience, digital inclusion, care systems and territorial cohesion.

Local and Regional Governments Call for:

46. Expanding technical and financial support to LRGs for quality, reliable, sustainable and climate-resilient infrastructure that strengthens local public services and reduces territorial divides.
47. Ensuring that LRGs shape national infrastructure, industrial and innovation strategies from the outset, so that investment responds to territorial needs, strengthens local innovation ecosystems and reduces inequalities.
48. Ensuring that infrastructure, industrial and innovation strategies are designed with territories and support local innovation ecosystems, decent work, productive capacities and circular and low-carbon economies.
49. Mobilizing and aligning long-term finance for territorial infrastructure through project preparation, capacity-building and partnerships with public development banks, multilateral development banks and other partners.
50. Prioritizing the upgrading, rehabilitation and retrofitting of public buildings, social housing, schools, care facilities, markets and community spaces to improve energy efficiency, accessibility, climate adaptation and resilience.
51. Recognizing digital connectivity and access to the internet as public services and commons, and empowering LRGs to govern digital public infrastructure in the public interest.

4. Making local multilateralism a driver of SDG 17

Partnerships for democratic governance and territorial delivery

52. Partnerships must become governance arrangements that share power, resources and accountability across spheres of government.
53. SDG 17 is the political test of the 2030 Agenda: whether partnership can become shared governance, shared responsibility and shared accountability. Partnerships only accelerate implementation when they align political mandates, financing, data, capacities and accountability across spheres of government.
54. Local and regional governments give practical meaning to this agenda by convening communities, civil society, workers, academia, local economic actors and public institutions around shared territorial priorities. Through public services, housing, climate action, infrastructure, culture, equality policies and local economic development, they connect global commitments with the institutions and communities that deliver them, including through public-community partnerships rooted in proximity, trust and shared responsibility.
55. The 2026 HLPF must strengthen this way of governing in partnership. Multilevel governance should enable co-design, joint implementation and shared review, ensuring that national strategies are informed by territorial realities and that local action is supported by adequate mandates and resources.
56. VLRs and VSRs are central to this shift. They generate territorial evidence, strengthen transparency and create platforms for dialogue between local, regional and national actors. Their findings should systematically inform VNRs, national SDG strategies, policy planning and HLPF deliberations.
57. The Pact for the Future and the Secretary-General's report A/79/968 provide an opportunity to move from recognition to institutional practice. The Local and Regional Governments Forum should be reinforced as the constituency's political space within the HLPF and anchored more firmly within the ECOSOC-HLPF architecture.
58. Decentralized cooperation is also a key expression of SDG 17. It connects territories, supports peer learning, scales shared solutions and strengthens solidarity across borders, especially in the face of climate shocks, inequalities and pressures on local public services.
59. Local democracy is a cornerstone of sustainable development. Strengthening transparency, participation, accountability and civic trust is essential to address polarization, misinformation and declining confidence in public institutions at all levels.
60. **We, local and regional governments, commit to** governing in partnership with communities, civil society, workers, academia, local economic actors, national governments, the United Nations system and partners. We will continue to make global commitments visible and actionable in territories, while bringing territorial priorities, evidence and voices into national, regional and global decision-making.

Partnerships must become governance arrangements that share power, resources and accountability across spheres of government.

Local and Regional Governments Call for:

61. Recognizing LRGs as political actors and partners in national, regional and global governance frameworks.
62. Institutionalizing structured and distinct LRG participation in United Nations decision-making, implementation, follow-up and review, including through the stronger anchoring of the Local and Regional Governments Forum within the ECOSOC-HLPF architecture.
63. Integrating VLRs and VSRs systematically into national SDG strategies, VNR processes, policy planning and HLPF deliberations.
64. Strengthening multilevel and metropolitan governance arrangements that align mandates, financing, data and accountability across spheres of government.
65. Aligning multilevel governance commitments across the Rio Conventions and the 2030 Agenda, including through CHAMP under the UNFCCC and the Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity under the CBD, so that recognition gained in one framework reinforces the others.
66. Moving from ad hoc consultation to co-design, joint implementation and shared review with the organized constituency of local and regional governments, including through decentralized cooperation.
67. Expanding fiscal space, predictable intergovernmental transfers and access to adequate, affordable and long-term finance for territorial implementation.



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