



Republic
of Rwanda



The Kigali Declaration on building local resilience across the Commonwealth

Preamble

The Commonwealth Local Government Conference 2023: *Building local resilience across the Commonwealth* brought together ministers of local government; local government mayors and leaders, governors; representatives from local government associations; senior officials; development partners; academics; and private sector representatives, including a youth cohort, from 40 countries in Kigali, Rwanda and was inaugurated by Dr. Edouard Ngirente, Prime Minister of the Republic of Rwanda.

Acknowledging the current global context of multiple on-going and interconnected challenges including the climate emergency, rising inflation, rapid urbanisation, Covid recovery and growing inequalities;

Concerned about the failure to reduce greenhouse gas emissions adequately and to mobilise sufficient climate finance to support the Global South to achieve a just transition;

Recalling that localisation is an essential lever for accelerating progress to Agenda2030 and specifically the SDGs in this decade of implementation, and acknowledging the outcomes of the SDG Summit, held in September 2023;

Noting the importance of building resilience across our societies, including in our institutions, democratic processes, built environment, service delivery and fiscal systems;

Highlighting that building resilience must be a bottom-up process which requires effective leadership that puts communities at the centre of development;

Recognising that 60% of Commonwealth citizens are under the age of 30 and that the energy and dynamism of young people must be mobilised to ensure a resilient future;

Emphasising that local governments' access to finance is crucial in supporting their ability to undertake effective planning, address inequalities, act on climate, reinforce economies and ensure social and political inclusion;

Ensuring that local governments have the skills, tools, knowledge and technology necessary to enhance resilience and seize opportunities for sustainable development;

Welcoming the recent adoption of the Commonwealth Declaration on Sustainable Urbanisation by Commonwealth Heads of Government, which recognises the need for action to address rapid urbanisation in the Commonwealth and the importance of effective multi-level governance and partnership to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient, and sustainable.

Accordingly agrees the adoption of the *Kigali Declaration on building local resilience across the Commonwealth* by CLGF members and partners as follows:

Building resilience is a bottom-up process. Local government is on the front line of addressing citizen's needs and responding to the climate emergency and inter-related shocks including natural disasters, pandemics and conflict. It is no longer sufficient for governments to respond in silos, multi-level and multi-sectoral action is essential for delivery against multiple targets.



National governments can sometimes struggle to move at pace and scale when delivering sustainable development. Decentralised and empowered local government is an important partner in ensuring sustainable development. Local areas have to respond to immediate challenges and are best placed to identify and tackle the issues faced locally, including basic service provision, infrastructure development, affordable housing, climate adaptation and mitigation, enabling business and providing sustainable mobility.

After extensive discussions aligned with the five SDG pillars of People, Prosperity, Planet, Peace and Partnership, delegates agreed:

1. Delivering resilient societies through a focus on people

- 1.1.** Local government must plan and prepare for future health emergencies and pandemics, learning from the experience of Covid 19. Cities and local governments should invest in planners and built environment professionals to work alongside local leaders and the community.
- 1.2.** Growing inequalities leads to a lack of trust between citizens and public institutions. Local government and local leaders have a responsibility to work to rebuild trust and enable active and meaningful public participation and inclusion.
- 1.3.** The world is urbanising. It is important to ensure that towns and cities are inclusive and liveable, but also to recognise the inter-dependence between urban and rural areas and ensure equitable access to services for all, leaving no-one behind.
- 1.4.** Inward migration enriches communities and promotes prosperity. The positive contribution of migrants and diasporas to the cities of the Commonwealth should be welcomed. Tools to help local leaders to integrate new arrivals should be developed and shared while planning for the impact of growing urban populations.

2. Reinforcing resilience through a focus on economies

- 2.1.** Local governments are enablers and facilitators of local economic development, stimulating opportunities for investment and diversification. This includes their emerging role in the development of innovation districts and within entrepreneurship ecosystems. Local government can use a variety of levers to support the local economy e.g. procurement, contracting, planning, and service delivery. Convening local stakeholders, including the private and informal sectors, ensures local ownership and reinforces social resilience and inclusion.
- 2.2.** Effective public financial management is critical for both upward and downward accountability and improves planning, budgeting, and monitoring. Digitalisation and digital tools must be capitalised on to support efficiency and accountability. Regular review of fiscal challenges and access to accurate data will help local government to strengthen their public financial management systems and increase own-source revenue mobilisation by building trust with citizens.
- 2.3.** Access to adequate resources is essential for local government to respond to the needs of citizens effectively. Enabling legislation and policies for local government to access debt finance, borrow, mobilise investments and access new funding sources are essential to augment insufficient public funds.
- 2.4.** Partnership between local government and the private sector is increasingly important. Local government needs the skills and capacity to engage effectively with the private sector



to increase investment in local development, whilst ensuring social protection and minimising risks to its own assets and resources.

3. Environment

- 3.1. Central and local government must work together to raise awareness of the impacts of climate change in communities, build capacity, mobilise stakeholders and ensure coordinated action for climate mitigation and adaptation as well as disaster risk reduction. They should draw on nature-based solutions and traditional knowledge systems and engage communities in climate action. This is particularly important in small island developing states (SIDS) which are especially vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.
- 3.2. Local government should have direct access to green finance to reinforce local resilience and enable communities to adapt to and mitigate climate risks. Local capacity to access data, develop feasibility studies and environmental impact assessments are essential to enabling access to green finance, but efforts should be made to continue to reduce impediments to local access to green finance.

4. Democracy

- 4.1. Effective decentralisation by full devolution of powers, functions and resources enables local communities to be the architects of their own development. Women and young people, as well as marginalised groups, must be fully represented in decision making, planning and service delivery at all levels. Political parties and local government associations should take practical action towards ensuring equity in representation at the local level.
- 4.2. Disaggregated data should underpin local decision making, and local government should look for innovative ways to bridge the data gap using administrative data, big data, and other data sources including through partnerships with the private sector.
- 4.3. Digitalisation is a valuable tool to improve public accountability, efficiency, and service delivery. Artificial intelligence and big data present opportunities in relation to delivering the next generation of local public services. Local government should capitalise on these opportunities while remaining vigilant to the potential risks.

CLGF members and partners will work together to deliver through a focus on

- Support and recognition of successful and transformative local leadership, celebrating success stories, and working to invigorate and professionalise local government, instilling a mindset of proactive, development and resilience focused leadership; and support for mentoring and preparation of young leaders for the future across the Commonwealth.
- Developing a programme of city-to-city partnership as well as promoting collaboration with existing member organisations with similar or related programmes to share, document and disseminate lessons of good practice, as well as to build the capacity of local governments to deliver.
- Strengthen networking across the Commonwealth to reinforce local resilience, including through the ComWLGN, CSCN and CYSU.
- Establish a CLGF Taskforce on mobilising finance for development at the local level to provide a space for dialogue and identifying options and innovations, as well as potential partnerships for delivery.



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- Fostering collaboration among various stakeholders towards effective climate change mitigation interventions and ensure that local communities play a critical role in selection, implementation, and evaluation of these interventions.
- Continue to build the capacity of local government to be resilient, to achieve the SDGs, to meaningfully engage communities and to leave no one behind.
- Use global international and high-level meetings such as COP28 and CHOGM 2024 and continue to partner with other specialist networks and platforms to reinforce the local dimension of resilience, and the importance of building resilience from the bottom up through partnership with local government.

Expresses warm appreciation to the Government and People of Rwanda and to all speakers, resource persons, sponsors, exhibitors, and partners for making the conference a success.

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