



Building Back Better: Social and Economic Strategies to Strengthen Resilience in West and Central Africa

CLGF West and Central Africa Regional Conference

25-27 July 2023 (Yaoundé, Cameroon)

Meeting conclusions

Introduction

Ministers, local government leaders, senior officials from local and central government, representatives of local government associations and development partners, met on the 25-27 July 2023 to discuss the role of local government as a driver for economic, environmental and social transformation Post-Covid.

They highlighted the multiple and converging challenges impacting at the local level that must be addressed in an integrated manner to achieve sustainable and equitable development in the region. These include rapid urbanisation, the climate emergency, deepening inequalities and the impact of global destabilisation resulting from the cost of living crisis, lack of food security, and weakened global supply chains.

They emphasised the importance of local government in continuing to strengthen its voice in global policy making including around climate and the SDGs. They stressed that the decade of implementation of Agenda 2030 will not be achieved without the genuine engagement of local and regional governments.

The participants shared practical solutions in the form of local actions that they are already implementing. They highlighted the importance of continuing to learn from each other and share locally grown solutions and approaches. They stressed the importance of action and committed to the following priorities:

- Strengthening local government finance
- Climate action at the local level
- Prioritizing social inclusion
- Local economic development
- Enhancing local democracy

They welcomed the policy and funding commitments of different development partners, most notably the EU and its Global Europe Initiative, to support local government as an actor in development and to ensure that territorial local development is not lost in wider national and regional priorities.

Recommendations

- LRG should be empowered with adequate resources, access to new funding sources, an enabling legal framework and the necessary autonomy to direct local development
- LRG must build trust through meaningful engagement of citizens, increased transparency & accountability and effective monitoring and evaluation
- Capacity building for LRG must be a priority as well as support for new partnerships and improve intergovernmental relationships
- LRGs should prioritise demand driven LED which supports local livelihoods, green jobs and provides for value addition industries making use of local resources. Women, young people and PLWD should be empowered to realise their potential.
- LRG should digitalise and modernize its operations and services to improve efficiency and accountability
- LGAs and other national actors should support local investment through conferences, mobilization of international exchange and profiling of their members and partners
- LRGs must take a leading role in adaptation and mitigation actions (protecting forests, sustainable agriculture, watershed management, circular economy, renewable energy).
- LRGs should be part of national climate action plan and planning processes, and the monitoring and evaluation of their implementation
- All actors should seek to increase awareness, advocacy and resource mobilisation to strengthen local democratic processes. Women, young people and people living with disabilities should be enabled to play a full role in local decision making.
- LRGs should be encouraged and enabled to participate in meetings, study visits and exchanges at a regional and cross-Commonwealth level



- LRGs should take an active role in promoting closer regional integration
- CLGF should continue to support LRGs in the region toward achieving these priorities, including resource mobilization, and should work to amplify the voice of its local government members from West and Central Africa in Commonwealth and international policy processes.

These cannot be achieved without cooperative multi-level governance and support for an active citizenry. Effective decentralisation must underpin this process. Commitments to consistent finance, access to innovative public and private funding sources, enhanced capacity, and greater autonomy in decision making and resource allocation are at the heart of this. Leadership at all levels and engagement of local communities will ensure a sustainable and inclusive future for all.

Participants:

Welcomed the presence of their peers from across the local government sector of Cameroon, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Togo. They appreciated the contributions made by all of the speakers and presenters. They welcomed the keynote address given by Hon Georges Elanga Obam, Minister of Decentralisation and Local Development, Cameroon and Vice Chairperson of CLGF; the participation of CLGF Chairperson, Rev Mpho Moruakgomo; the Cooperation Team Leader from the EU Delegation; and the warm welcome provided by the Mayor of Yaounde, the Vice President of the UCCC and the Vice Chair of the ARC.

They thanked the teams from the Ministry of Decentralisation and Local Development (MINDDEVEL), United Councils and Cities of Cameroon (UCCC) and CLGF for the organisation of the meeting. They appreciated the presence of the Minister Delegate in charge of Cooperation with the Commonwealth in the Ministry of External Relations. They looked forward to sharing outcomes of the meeting at CLGF's forthcoming conference in Kigali, Rwanda 14-17 November 2023.

They welcomed the opportunity to exchange with their regional counterparts and highlighted the value of shared learning. Finally they expressed appreciation to the EU for their support.