

Climate Summit for local and regional leaders, COP 22 14 November, Marrakech

Opening Speech of UCLG President – M. Parks Tau

Excellences,
Dear hosts,
Dear colleagues,
Dear friends,

I am privileged to stand before you today, on behalf of local and regional government leaders from all of the organizations that have contributed to our mobilization throughout the years, and which are mentioned in the programme you have in your hands.

We are too many to mention one by one, but allow me to take a moment to thank the city of Marrakech, the Association of Regions and Local Councils and the Government of Morocco for hosting us here today.

I cannot emphasize enough how relevant our joint efforts are. How important it is that our associations and networks are working hand in hand. This is giving us more visibility than ever before and it is also allowing us to demonstrate our true potential.

We are, dear friends, at a historic moment, and we have a historic responsibility. Never before has awareness of the impact of climate change been so great; never has there been such a broad political will worldwide, and never before have we had international development agendas converging so significantly. Never before have we been so united.

Our constituency has always advocated for ensuring the coherence of all international agendas, and for building on the interlinkages among them. We have always claimed that the climate agenda doesn't make sense unless it is linked with the development agenda. This simple affirmation, which seems very much accepted today, was not obvious some years ago at COP15.

We need to understand that all agendas are universal and that *current systems of production and consumption will need to be redefined to ensure the ecological restoration of planetary systems, and to tackle the persistent challenges of increasing social inequalities and protecting cultural diversity.*

As agreed in our meetings in Bogotá last month:

1. *The current context should be seen as a moment of **opportunity** that necessitates bold undertakings with special attention to bridging inequalities.*
2. *Local and regional governments will need to be at the centre of the public policy process, **translating normative ideals into concrete policies***
3. *The answers generated within urban settlements and territories will **pave the way for global solutions***

This will require: First, *action at local and country level*: to govern in partnership, aiming to co-create cities and territories that adapt production and consumption patterns for a sustainable future and share and protect the commons.

Second, *action at international level* to transform the role of local governments in international policymaking.

The Role of Local Governments

As a result of the growing links between global and local challenges, local and regional governments now play a greater role in the regulation of the urban fabric and territories, but often lack the resources to meet these new challenges.

According to experts, the overall amounts of investments needed to meet the SDGs and the Climate Agreement should be on average tripled over the next 15 years. Moreover, as acknowledged by the UN Secretary General, most of this investment effort should take place at the local level.

The reality however is that we DO NOT have the means to do this.

The financial requirements

We will need to redefine fiscal decentralization frameworks allowing for a fairer distribution of national resources. We need to foster fiscal autonomy to raise taxes and capture a part of the land added-value that local investments have contributed to create.

Our research shows that in high income countries, where more than 30% of national resources are devolved to local governments, their contribution to national public investments is as high as 49%. On the contrary, low-income countries, where local governments' resources

represent less than 8% of national resources, their contribution to national investments reach only 7.3%.

We know, therefore, that few new partnerships will be possible, that renovation of our sustainability models won't be feasible, unless we change the distribution of national resources.

The policy requirements

We will also need to revisit decentralization frameworks and allow borrowing to pre-fund investment.

We are aware that we cannot wait for structural reforms. We call, therefore, for solutions that combine long-term capacity building with immediate access to funding. We need to mobilize the international community to implement new instruments to respond to this challenge: such as pool-financing or guarantee mechanisms.

It is paradoxical that, in a context of high level of global savings, less than 5% go to urban investments. We have to find a way to channel these savings towards the local level and, in this regard, the role of ODA and climate finance is essential to leverage investments.

We cannot think about climate finance without linking it with the general policy frameworks and economic contexts.

The governance requirements

A new global governance architecture is needed that allows local and regional governments to be represented beyond the margins of climate conferences.

As we have been conveying over recent years, the international community can count on us, organized as a single constituency to contribute to global processes and implementation. However, we expect structural consultation mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the global agendas. This will be the only way we can ensure the achievement of the 2030 agenda and compliance with the Paris Agreement.

Finally, the efforts made by cities, regions and our networks to reduce emissions must be part and parcel of national reporting mechanisms and should be financially and politically supported by those mechanisms.

I am convinced that the important steps forward that have been taken through our specific initiatives: the Global Covenant, The Cities Climate Finance Leadership Alliance, The Under2MOU, The Compact

of States and Regions, RegionsAdapt, the climate roadmap and the all-encompassing World Assembly of Local and Regional will lead to unprecedented results.

We all feel it, dear friends, the time to act is now and change can only be fostered if we are able to demonstrate to our communities that we are capable of delivering.

Let us join forces, be bold and trigger real change.

Thank you.