

22nd session of the Committee of Experts on Public Administration

Written statement by United Cities and Local Governments of Africa and World Secretariat

Agenda item 6: Application of the UN principles of effective governance for sustainable development for the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals

Concurrent crises are threatening the very existence of our planet and societies. Half a way to 2030, the achievement of the SDGs has become critical to preserve our future, and protect our communities, as underlined by UCLG Pact for the Future.

The involvement of local and subnational governments is instrumental for strong acceleration of the localization of the SDGs. Their participation in the reporting process is a lever to create awareness, strategize for increased impact and to advocate for greater acknowledgement of and a more enabling institutional environment for the role of local and subnational governments in achieving our global sustainability commitments.

Local reports are more than a simple monitoring tool. They are a political process.

Their contribution to the global SDG reporting has grown exponentially over the last years: from 20 **Voluntary Local Reviews** (VLRs) in 2018 to 180 in 2022 -representing 500 thousand million inhabitants from 42 countries.

To accelerate their involvement, UCLG in partnership with its sections launched in 2020 a complementary approach: **Voluntary Subnational Reviews** (VSRs). While VLRs contribute with pinpointed input from individual local governments, VSRs are developed by local government associations with inputs from their members, and offer a broader country-wide analysis of subnational efforts for the localization of the SDGs.

The VSR makes it possible to multiply the number of territories that report on. Twenty-six VSR have been developed during the past three years - representing 165,000 local and subnational governments (25% of existent world local and subnational governments) with 1,2 billion inhabitants from 24 countries. Eight more are being developed in 2023.

Most of the national voluntary reports have incorporated the VSR that was submitted to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

List of countries that developed a VSR

2020 (6): Benin, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Kenya, Mozambique, Nepal,

2021 (9): Cape Verde, Ecuador, Germany, Indonesia, Mexico, Norway, Sweden, Tunisia, Zimbabwe

2022 (11): Argentina, Botswana, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Ecuador, Italy, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, The Netherlands, The Philippines and Uruguay

2023 (8): Belgium, Cambodia, Chile, Comoros, Kenya, Romania, Rwanda, Tanzania.

VSR assess the efforts of local and subnational governments to align local development plans with the SDGs, present an assessment of the enabling institutional environment (progress made in decentralization policies, fiscal decentralization and local access to financing, cooperation between different levels of government, etc), including the means of implementation which supports these processes. Notably, the VSRs present policy recommendations for improving local implementation and national collaboration.

Whereas VLRs are now recognized as a catalyst for the localization process, VSRs are slowly becoming recognized as a lever for creating a more comprehensive, nation-wide, multi-level approach to governance related to the monitoring and reporting of the SDGs. Upscaling the VSR process, hand-in-hand with that of the VLR, gives many opportunities for an improved bottom-up dialogue on how to achieve the SDGs, which input is of vital importance to national governments. The involvement of LRGs associations in national reporting processes has influenced national dialogues and mechanisms for SDG implementation.

The SDGs have become important pillars in the work of local and subnational governments associations that support their members in SDG implementation, help local and subnational governments learn from each other, find solutions for common obstacles, and mobilise local and subnational governments to take their responsibilities in achieving the SDGs.

Main Outcome

Foster the localization efforts and ownership of the SDGs at local level

A bottom-up approach of SDG implementation: Develop a mapping and summary of what local governments are doing to localize the SDGs at country level

Strengthen the voice of local and regional governments and their national associations in the national and international reporting process (VNRs, HLPF)

Reinforce dialogue with national governments: Reports were included, or referenced, in their countries' respective national VNRs

Development of the network of the LGAs and partners to exchange and strengthen their institutional capacities

To support this process, UCLG, his sections and the CIB Working Group published in 2021 a VSR Guidelines. The **Guidelines provide concrete principles and technical suggestions as well as guidance on the key approaches to consider when producing a VSR and as to how to maximise its advocacy potential.**

The guidelines follow the structure of the Guidelines proposed by UNDESA for the VNR, which makes it the natural link between the VLR which it highlights and the VNR which it enriches with the contribution of the territories.

