



COP28 UAE

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COP28 | Territorial leaders call for more action to fight climate change!

Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) remain unwavering in their commitment to the Paris Agreement. Our next milestone is COP 28, the upcoming Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Dubai (United Arab Emirates) in November-December 2023.

Time however is no longer on our side. We have just passed the halfway mark for the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, but the same cannot be said of its implementation, which seems to have fallen dishearteningly behind schedule with only 15% of the SDGs on track.

Recognising this, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) and PLATFORMA call on the UN, the EU and the national governments negotiating the climate agreement to consider the following key points:

1. Real governance structured around resource allocation, accountability mechanisms, consultation and structured dialogue involving local and regional governments in international climate negotiations is needed
2. Nature and the earth's climate are linked and contribute to adaptations to climate change
3. Local and regional public services are best placed to respond efficiently and timely to local needs and are key in attaining climate mitigation objectives
4. Fighting social inequalities and increasing community-participatory processes places everyone on a more level playing field
5. The integration of territorial leaders needs to be unambiguous with respect to the planning of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and national multilevel governance on climate
6. Multilevel cooperation, capacity building, technology transfer and partnerships need to be reinforced throughout the process to combat climate change
7. Localising the Sustainable Development Goals is a key factor in achieving climate objectives

1. Real governance structured around resource allocation, consultation, accountability mechanisms and structured dialogue with local and regional governments in international climate negotiations is needed

Climate action is urgently needed! To successfully attain the goal of carbon neutrality by 2050, the degree of change required to mitigate emissions to adhere to the Paris Agreement's objectives and adapt to climate change can only be instigated through strong political commitment and leadership involving all levels of government and partners. Moreover, the allocation of increased financial resources to LRGs to adequately support and fund their climate and sustainability projects is also vital in implementing climate action.

LRGs have increasingly been welcomed as important partners for carrying out international agreements¹. CEMR continues to be instrumental at this level in the climate field through its work in the [Local Governments and Municipal Authorities Constituency](#) (LGMA)². Considering the growing recognition at the national and international levels of the impact of global policies at subnational level, as well as the now universal acknowledgement of the key role played by LRGs in achieving climate objectives, LRGs call for a genuine and regular dialogue with the negotiating parties as well as inclusion in the national delegations to the COPs.

There is also a need to strengthen the collaboration among non-party stakeholders and to resort to robust climate diplomacy as a means to achieve SDGs as well as to secure a stronger role for LRGs in connection with any foreign policy touching on international climate policy.

We also call for mechanisms that hold governments accountable in terms of their climate and sustainability commitments. Transparency and accountability are essential to ensure progress. And, as the last [UN climate summit](#) in New York last September clearly showed, the only way forward is through the alignment of sectoral, local, national and international plans and policies³.

2. Nature and the earth's climate are linked and contribute to adaptations to climate change

Biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation are occurring at an alarming rate, with up to a million plant and animal species on the brink of extinction. The preservation of nature and biodiversity is an essential prerequisite in effectively addressing climate change as we have seen the harm inflicted by the loss and damage arising from sudden-onset events.

Municipalities and regions have many powerful levers of action at their disposal to protect biodiversity, including environmental monitoring, spatial planning, planning of urban and natural spaces, transport, water management and capacity building, all of which is made

possible through decentralised cooperation with other local governments.

This is why CEMR and PLATFORMA share the views expressed in the declaration adopted at the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (COP 15 held in Montreal last December). We also support the objectives of the EU Nature Restoration Law, which seeks to ensure that goals for the protection of nature, habitat restoration, and species recovery are established. We wish to emphasise the importance of setting both qualitative and quantitative biodiversity targets across all ecosystems. However, it is also crucial to allow for sufficient flexibility in implementation to account for the diverse local contexts in which these targets will be pursued.

By prioritising biodiversity conservation and implementing robust targets, we can make significant strides towards safeguarding our planet's natural heritage and securing a sustainable future for all.

3. Local and regional public services are best placed to respond efficiently and timely to local needs and are key in attaining climate mitigation objectives

The local level is the most immediate level of governance to react when a crisis occurs that affects citizens. This was apparent during the COVID-19 crisis and now with the war in Ukraine. Formal recognition of the subnational level needs to be more patently clear. To ensure expeditious results from local actions, LRGs require appropriate and sufficient powers, greater capacity and financing to better respond to the challenges of investment and operating costs. International agreements, European Union legislation and national legal and regulatory frameworks must take the diversity of local and regional conditions and actors into account, allowing for different solutions.

In this respect, we also wish to see a general simplification of the rules regarding the exercise of public service missions and call for a differentiated approach to take into account the specificities of local and regional public services.

4. Fighting social inequalities and increasing community-participatory processes places everyone on a more level playing field

Our efforts to become climate-neutral and sustainable societies require a gender-sensitive and intersectional approach that responds to the needs of boys, girls, men, and women in all their diversity, as set forth in the 2030 Agenda. Poor and vulnerable groups (women in particular) suffer inordinately from the negative effects of climate-related crises, which only exacerbates existing inequalities among populations. National governments and LRGs need to ensure that climate and sustainability initiatives benefit all members of society, especially vulnerable populations.

¹ Since the COP21 in Paris

² Led by ICLEI, at the United Nations. Our global partner, the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) - which leads on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) portfolio globally - is also part of LGMA.

³ Accompanied by credible and science-based targets, which will accelerate decarbonisation and advance climate action with a renewed focus on credibility and accountability.



To ensure a level playing field for stakeholders to act locally, in a way that advances us towards a society that is low-carbon and sustainable, appropriate means must be provided in a fair, just and equitable manner. Genuine and timely consultations with the citizens also need to be established on a regular basis.

A participatory approach will encourage the inclusion of local communities in decision-making processes and, incontrovertibly, engaged communities are more inclined to support and participate in climate and sustainability efforts.

5. The integration of territorial leaders needs to be unambiguous with respect to the planning of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and national multilevel governance on climate

In 2023/2024, the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) will be updated⁴. In the EU member and candidate states, the NDCs will be revised as part of the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECP)⁵.

We resolutely call for territorial leaders to be integrated into the drafting phase of NDCs / NECPs, which is when climate and energy policies are incubated.

Ensuring an effective vertical integration will also support the implementation of effective climate actions through an increase in the local and regional ownership of climate and energy policies.

Likewise, an increase in horizontal integration is also needed. Furthermore, LRGs' participation in developing NDCs / NECPs contributes to the effective horizontal design and implementation of the plans. After all, it falls to LRGs to oversee the execution of most aspects of climate-related policies, e.g. public investments in renewable energies, energy efficient buildings, public education in green skills, permitting, spatial planning and land use. Their involvement in the planning phase can therefore ensure cross-sectoral policy-coherence.

6. Multilevel cooperation, capacity building, technology transfer and partnerships need to be reinforced throughout the process to combat climate change

The international community needs to further promote multi-level cooperation, vertically as well as horizontally, consisting of peer learning, exchange of best practices, capacity building, making use of the Global Covenant of Mayors framework and using the support of decentralised cooperation actions to good account⁶.

More capacity-building programs are needed at the local and regional levels. Many subnational governments lack the technical and financial resources needed to implement climate and sustainability initiatives effectively. Greater sharing of sustainable

and climate-resilient technologies with LRGs must also be promoted in order to accelerate progress in emissions reduction and sustainable development.

The EU Development Education and Awareness Raising (DEAR) programme supports education for sustainable development actions, including campaigns aimed at citizens and municipalities to foster greater critical understanding of the effects of climate change and to ensure ownership of proposed solutions for the transition to a more sustainable future.

In parallel, the COP28's [Global Stocktake](#)⁷ also works to ensure a successful path to reaching the Paris Agreement. The Stocktake is a process driven by parties to the Agreement that includes the participation of non-party stakeholders. This is where the local level wishes to be a key actor as this process enables countries and other stakeholders to determine where progress has been made in terms of meeting the Paris Agreement's goals. As outlined in the LGMA Constituency's [joint position](#), international partnership and collaboration are critical to attaining concrete results.

7. Localising the Sustainable Development Goals is a key factor in achieving climate objectives

A territorial approach to the SDGs and their localisation is crucial to achieving positive impacts on the ground. The 2030 Agenda's aims cannot be reached if the local and regional level are not able or allowed to play an essential role in transforming the SDGs' international ambitions into practical realities. The OECD⁸ estimates that, of the 169 targets underpinning the 17 SDGs, 65% are not attainable without the engagement – and coordination – of local and regional governments.

CEMR continues to support its members' work on the localisation of SDGs and the territorialisation of sustainable development actions. These efforts can be integrated into a wider EU strategy aimed at achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda. The SDGs HLPF in July and the SDG summit in September showed that only 15% of the SDGs are on schedule. Time and time again, there has been a proven need for action to be taken at the subnational level and for its inclusion in the debates and negotiations, as Member States cannot do what is needed alone. In this regard, we also need to continue advocating for improved data collection and monitoring at the local and regional levels. This is vital if we are to measure the real progress – at the level closest to citizens – towards climate and sustainability goals.

NOTE: As reminder, COP27 messages here in [English](#) and [French](#).

⁴ <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement/nationally-determined-contributions-ndcs#NDC-Synthesis-Report>

⁵ https://energy.ec.europa.eu/topics/energy-strategy/national-energy-and-climate-plans-necps_en?redir=1#public-consultation-on-necps

⁶ CEMR is a founding member of the Covenant of Mayors and its global alliance, GCoM, and coordinates PLATFORMA. For more climate information on PLATFORMA, see <https://platforma-dev.eu> and

the [thematic note](#) "Tackling climate change through decentralised cooperation".

⁷ The GST takes inventory of the implementation of the Paris Agreement to better assess the world's collective progress towards its goals. The LGMA will be contributing to the first stocktake, a two-year process (held every five years), scheduled to conclude the COP28.

⁸ [OECD Programme on a Territorial Approach to the SDGs - OECD](#)





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CEMR is the broadest organisation of local and regional governments in Europe, with over 60 national associations of municipalities and regions from 41 European countries. Together, they represent some 130,000 local and regional governments. CEMR's objectives are twofold: to shape European legislation on behalf of local and regional governments and to provide a platform for exchange between its member associations and their elected officials and experts. CEMR is also the European Section of United Cities and Local Governments, the worldwide organisation of local government.

PLATFORMA is the pan-European coalition of towns and regions – and their national, EU and global associations – active in city-to-city and region-to-region development cooperation. It is a hub of expertise for European local and regional governments' international action, and works to bolster European local and regional governments' contribution to EU development cooperation policies and international frameworks.

