

Statement of the Local and Regional Government Constituency

To be delivered by Mr. Jan Van Zanen, Mayor of Utrecht, and President of VNG, the Association of Netherlands Municipalities; on behalf of the Global Taskforce

Excellencies,

Dear colleagues,

It is a pleasure and an honor to be here today to share with you, as Mayor of the city of Utrecht and as president of the Association of Netherlands Municipalities, the views and perspectives of the local and regional governments constituency on behalf of United Cities and Local Governments and the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments.

Ladies and gentlemen, there are around 400.000 local and regional governments in the countries presenting Voluntary National Reviews in this HLPF. With adequate resources, competencies and ownership, they have an enormous ability to reach the 5.2 billion people living in them.

In my city for example, we have made the SDGs a framework to work with our citizens. We strongly involve civil society, knowledge institutions and the private sector in working towards the SDGs, both locally and internationally. It is thus an agenda of the entire city, not just of the municipality. We have also done an exercise to check how our policies are already aligned with the SDGs and made a benchmark on SDG 11 to be able to measure our progress in the coming years. Municipalities from all over the Netherlands and Europe come to learn from our approach. And as it is learning by doing, we also learn a lot from our colleagues from other municipalities. Our Association of Municipalities facilitates this exchange through a Municipalities4GlobalGoals campaign.

I am telling you this to underline that in order to achieve the SDGs, full ownership of the agenda at local level is decisive; this ownership must be felt by local governments, civil society and other actors.

All over the world Local and regional government networks are working on the “localization” of the SDGs, through their day-to-day work, as the level of government closest to citizens.

However, they do not often use the SDGs as explicit policy framework.

I therefore wish to stress that national governments and the international community need to recognize this role and involve them in setting the priorities to achieving the SDGs. This also includes the **New Urban Agenda**, as I, and almost a 1000 local representatives of the *World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments*, highlighted at Habitat III last year.

Our local, regional and global networks have drawn up a report to assess the level of involvement of sub-national governments in the monitoring of the SDGs. At the moment **only 37 of the 63 national reports mention subnational government participation** in monitoring mechanisms. (LAAT RAPPORT ZIEN) In the Netherlands my association of Netherlands Municipalities has been actively involved in drawing up the national report on the progress of the SDGs, and I know that other countries, such as Sweden, Belgium, Denmark, Colombia, Brazil and others have done the same.

In our assessment, we noted that 19 of the Voluntary National Reviews submitted in the past two years to the HLPF singled out decentralization as crucial to the implementation of the SDGs. 11 more referred to the need to strengthen local governance. This recognition is crucial, as local governments around the world need to be strengthened and they need **(legal and fiscal)** space to address poverty, inequality and other challenges in an integrated manner.

We recommend that the HLPF provide adequate space for local governments to report both in the national reports, and in a separate voluntary assessment, of which we present the first edition to you (LAAT RAPPORT NOGMAALS ZIEN) **from a local perspective and show-case what is being done**. This would reward those that are implementing the SDGs and encourage those who are not yet involved.

We are aware that the journey towards the achievement of the SDGs has just begun. And we also know that the challenges faced by our communities in this fast changing world are likely to grow. We are convinced that, whatever the challenge, **local needs must be at the heart of our work** and complement national policies and global visions, setting the scene for a new multi-level governance framework.

We hope our efforts can be acknowledged and harnessed. In the meantime, allow us to **reiterate the commitment of our organized constituency to the achievement of the Global Goals.**