

Local and Regional Governments Forum on the 2030 Agenda
“The Decade of Action: Bolstering Change from the Ground Up”

REMARKS by H.E. Tijjani Muhammad-Bande,
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Honorable Ada Colau, Mayor of Barcelona
Honorable Johnny Araya, Mayor of San Jose
Honorable Emilia Saiz, Secretary General of United Cities and Local Governments,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank the United Cities and Local Government Forum for convening today’s vital conversation as the world contends with the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic consequences.

The scale and severity of the pandemic is being felt in developing and developed countries alike. However, we must focus our response particularly on the two-thirds of the world’s population at risk of being left behind. We need to focus on specific actions that will alleviate the impact on the well-being and livelihoods of people in developing countries and the marginalized around the world. We need to address their specific needs now while building back.

In order to respond effectively, the Sustainable Development Goals must be at the forefront of government strategies for recovery to safeguard our communities against future shocks by building resilient systems. For developing countries this will require all stakeholders to re-commit to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda to ensure adequate financing for development. Furthermore, we will need to combat illicit financial flows which threaten the development of communities everywhere. In other context, redistribution, retraining will be key.

It is predicted, by 2050, 68% of the world’s population, will be urban. In developing countries, the urban population will double, and the area covered by cities could triple by 2030, with many people projected to live in informal settlements.

It is encouraging that 152 countries have adopted national urban policies to promote sustainable urbanization. I urge all Member States to emulate this leadership and work to safeguard the future for urban communities.

Furthermore, the threat of climate change has not receded, yet the development of urban centres concentrated along coastal areas is increasing. The negative effect of climate change is also felt by those living in the mountainous areas. Thus, we require climate-resilient urban management and a more concerted effort to utilize culture and innovation.

This is not a task for federal or local governments alone. Transformative partnerships with all stakeholders are key to promote people-centered policies and investments for liveable cities that provide decent, sustainable jobs, universal access to vital services including health, education, water, transport, energy and sanitation.

Excellencies,

I trust that you will utilize the support available to you, such as the Local 2030 toolbox and UNESCO's Culture 2030 Indicators. I also encourage the private sector to engage with the UN Global Compact Local Networks. The latter works to facilitate companies to make local connections – with other businesses and stakeholders from NGOs, government and academia – and receive guidance to put their sustainability commitments into action.

Excellencies,

I commend the 47 countries presenting Voluntary National Reviews at the High-Level Political Forum under the auspices of ECOSOC this year. These Member States have engaged with all stakeholders despite the challenging circumstances in order to prepare for these presentations. I trust that you will give them due consideration, for we each have something to teach and something to learn when it comes to implementing the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development.

This is a seminal year for the United Nations as we celebrate the 75th anniversary of our Organisation, the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women, and we begin the Decade of Action and Delivery to implement the Sustainable Development Goals. It will however, be remembered as the year that the world united against the coronavirus to protect the people we serve.

To communities around the world, I remind you that we are in this together. The General Assembly stands with you in your fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. I would urge you to utilize this event to connect with others, to deepen partnerships and to commit to urgent action to accelerate sustainable

development. Clearly, the 2030 Agenda is our best way to safeguard the people we serve.

I thank you.
