

Informal Notes of the remarks from the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Under-Secretary-General for Policy from the 1st meeting of the UN Secretary General’s Advisory Group on Local and Regional Government: 6 October, 9:30 am - 10:50 am EST



The meeting was attended by António Guterres, Secretary-General of the UN, Amina Mohamed, Deputy Secretary of the UN, Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director of UN Habitat, Guy Ryder, Under-Secretary-General for Policy and the team from the EOSG and the Development Planning Unit.

All members from the Advisory Group attended the meeting including the 5 representatives from Member States.



Opening remarks from the United Nations Secretary-General

The UN SG started by recalling the significant work carried out to establish the Group, which encompasses representation of local and regional governments and of national government thought leaders with exemplary multi-level governance experience. He stressed that the vision for the work of the Group stems from Our Common Agenda and the contributions of our constituency to the Summit of the Future.

The UN SG reaffirmed that local leaders are vital for global solutions; and that ownership of and trust in multilateral institutions are crucial. He mentioned having directly witnessed how important municipal councils are to build trust between institutions and the people we serve.

He stressed the need for having the perspectives and engagement of local and regional governments. The proposals of the Advisory Group for peace and security, the reform of the financial architecture, equality, climate action, and digital services, amongst others, are linked to the necessary renewal of the social contract. The SG highlighted that this would require a global deal for more justice in international relations and that the upcoming Summit of the Future, linked to the UN Pact for the Future, will be decisive to respond to current challenges and achieve the SDGs.

The SDGs are eminently local before being national and global, and can only be reached inch by inch at the local and regional government level, from education, health, jobs, and poverty reduction. Over 1000 cities have joined the Race to Zero. The fight against climate breakdown will be lost or won in cities.

He mentioned the resistance of many national governments to the necessary multi-stakeholder approach involving civil society and local communities. He confirmed that the multilateral institutions and the UN are more and more able to give a strong voice to local communities: the decisions taken at the global level affect everyone and must reflect the aspirations of all.

The SG mentioned that the contributions will allow decision-makers at the Summit of the Future to benefit from the local and territorial perspective and communities. Progress on most SDGs is going backwards, emissions continue to rise... We need resilient inclusive governments. The UN SG urged the Advisory Group to engage with UN's work at all levels.

The UN SG delegated two co-chairs: Ms. Fatimetou Mint Abdel Malick, President of Nouakchott Region, Mauritania, and Ms. Pilar Cancela Rodríguez, State Secretary for International Cooperation, Spain.

The UN SG said he is confident that together, we will be making a very important contribution to a renewed, inclusive and networked multilateralism.

Introductory remarks by Under-Secretary-General for Policy

USG Ryder underlined that that the UNSG laid out his vision for the Advisory Group to distill its local, regional, and national level experience, to inform national governments on ways to strengthen the engagement of local and regional governments in intergovernmental processes

The USG stressed that for this, we need to ensure that inputs and consultations at the local level reach global processes, channeling insights and actions from sub-national governments, industry, community organizations and individuals towards our common objectives - a central objective of the preparation process for the Summit of the Future.

The USG mentioned that through a set of policy briefs, Member States have been informed of topics that are critical to sustain SDG implementation, and which require a whole of government and whole of society approach, with inclusive and networked local and regional engagement.

Therefore the recommendations of the Advisory Group will serve as inputs to inform Member States in the lead up to the Summit of the Future and as part of the Pact for the Future.

The Terms of Reference were then presented:

The Group will meet with the Secretary-General on three occasions to inform on:

- local and regional governments' dimensions in preparatory processes of the Summit of the Future;
- modalities and means to enhance institutional mechanisms to strengthen engagement of local and regional governments in intergovernmental processes;
- opportunities to strengthen cooperation between national and local and regional governments, and the UN Country Teams; and
- recommendations on a United Nations global strategy for the engagement of local and regional governments, including institutional mechanisms, intergovernmental processes, and partnership arrangements, to strengthen contributions to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda.

The USG then stressed that the timing of the first meeting was intentionally positioned to provide an opportunity to harness the momentum from the SDG Summit, held last month in New York and that the following two meetings in 2024 will help inform the preparations for and the Summit of the Future itself during the 79th Session of the UN General Assembly to promote inclusive, networked, and effective multilateralism, as envisioned in the Our Common Agenda Report.

To guide the discussions, USG Ryder mentioned that five broad clusters would be addressed. The first concerns delivery of our outputs for the year and priorities for the future of the planet, people, and multilevel governance, while the final cluster will address ways to enhance collaboration drawing on perspectives of thought leaders in this field.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

The SG stated that the group in the context of Our Common Agenda is extremely important to better implement the SDGs and everything related to the SDG Summit, and that proposals were very relevant here. And in the preparation of the Summit of the Future, this group in the context of **multistakeholder multilateralism**.

Our constituency proposals and suggestions, the issues representatives want this body to discuss in relation with the work of the UN, will be very much welcome.

His suggestion was to look into the priorities of the members and that of the UN to prepare an **action plan for the Group, for the next 12 months**. An action plan with aspects on the UN interests and specific suggestions of the members. To contribute to the decisions of the UN.

He thanked the members' contributions today and stated they will have a very relevant impact on the UN system, in their capacity to work all together and to bring solutions that can only be effective at the local level.

The action plan will have to be created consultably. There is an important sub-national interface to bridge the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda.

This interface needs to be strengthened. It needs to inform the deliberations of Member States in the lead up to the Summit of the Future, with a view to advise on a UN global strategy for the engagement of local and regional governments, including institutional mechanisms, intergovernmental processes, and partnership arrangements.

This should contribute to the work of national governments across all levels, charting an inclusive, networked and multilateral approach to rescue our SDGs, in benefit of all.

Further details will be shared by the Executive Office of the Secretary General.