

MISSION REPORT

Purpose of mission: To participate in UNDP Consultative Meeting on Post-2015 MDG Agenda

Officer attending: Charles Patsika, Programme Manager

Mission Dates: 09 – 13 October 2012

Venue: Pan African Parliament, Republic of South Africa

Partner Organisers: United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

1. Introduction

The consultative meeting was held within the framework of the United Nations post-2015 process aimed at critically appraising the current MDG framework, map on-going activities inside and outside of the UN on defining a post-2015 agenda, and assess challenges that have become more prominent in the last decade. The UN secretary general mandated the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) to lead the work on post-2015 framework.

The meeting was attended by members of the Pan African Parliament and representatives of civil society organisations. The United Cities and Local Governments (World and Africa) participated in the deliberations representing local governments' concerns and interests. The UN aims to capture the voices of citizens through a process of 'global conversations' of open interaction and information exchange with citizens of the world. This consultation focused on Governance as a critical element in the post-2015 MDG Agenda.

2. Delivery Process

The meeting was held over two days and was divided into three segments: A plenary session with presentations by representatives of organisers, funders and experts; breakout sessions that explored key elements of the governance issues; and a closing session during which the recommendations of the breakout sessions were presented.

3. UCLG AND UCLGA Position Paper

Position paper of the UCLGA was submitted to the meeting conveners and key points highlighted during session discussions. A copy is attached.

4. Issues and Recommendations

Some highlights of the discussion points are outlined below:

- The need to recognise the matter of 'governance' as a transversal issue that transcends all aspects of the MDGs development agenda. Inclusive and participatory governance considered essential at all levels. In this regard, the African institutions of governance from the African Union, Regional Economic Communities, national and local governments all have a role in the delivery of MDGs. Regional organs will increasingly play a more pronounced role in governance matters as some pertinent decisions will be made at that level and, therefore, this must be taken into cognisance.
- The need to democratise the institutions of the United Nations, including the Security Council and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)
- The importance of a governance charter to synchronise African values and provide a framework for the promotion of good governance on the continent. It was reported that 15

African countries had already ratified the Charter. The challenge, however, still remains how to make governments accountable for their actions.

- There was also the African Union Charter on Public Services.
- Although women representation in decision making had increased, deprivation still remained an issue.
- It was recognised that although Africa was endowed with vast natural resources, the continent was failing to break-away from underdevelopment. This situation is likely to be exacerbated as new economic giants scramble for Africa's natural resources. Africa must awaken to the need to protect its natural resources and guard against wanton plunder and frittering away through excessive exploitation.
- The African Peer Review mechanism was hailed as a significant platform for exchange of knowledge, experience and learning.
- Although the MDGs programme had resulted in the reduction of poverty (halved), it was also clear that the incidence of extreme poverty was still very high. There would still be 1 billion poor people by 2015. The post-2015 agenda must, thus, have a pro-poor approach to address the plight of the most disadvantaged in the communities.
- Growing unemployment in Africa is a time bomb waiting to explode in the same manner as the 'Arab spring'. Africa should seriously address the needs of the youths and reach out and engage them in developing solutions to the challenges confronting them.
- The great recession in the United States of America would adversely affect availability of resources to support the post-2015 MDGs agenda. A key challenge for the post-2015 agenda would, thus, be lack of funding.
- Throughout Africa, decentralisation has become a reality; however, while responsibilities have been devolved to local governments, this has not been matched with the resources or means to execute them. It is essential that governments match devolution of functions to the resources so that local governments are able to perform their roles effectively.
- A word of caution was expressed on the risk of Africa being micro-managed by developed nations through donations. It was imperative that the post-2015 agenda be driven by Africa's needs rather than donor conditionalities. The importance of mobilizing local resources and reduction of dependence on donor aid was also highlighted.
- The private sector must be harnessed to participate in development in a more organised manner. The sector should also be made to account for its activities. Often they have only been focused on making profits while ignoring the adverse impacts of their activities on the communities around them and the environment.
- On the role of the media, it was suggested that the media could play a significant role in promoting development through publication of information to educate and appraise the public as well as expose corrupt practices
- Citizens' participation in governance was an essential tool to promote democracy and good governance. Communities should be empowered to engage public institutions in a manner that enables them to effectively demand services they are entitled to. Civil society could also monitor accountability of governance organs.

United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLGA) and UCLG World

Message to the

African Regional Dialogue on Governance and the Post-2015 Framework, Johannesburg, 11-12 October 2012

Local Governance, a cornerstones of Good Governance in Africa and a critical condition for the Post-2015 Agenda

1. Some fundamental developments that will shape Governance Post-2015

1.1 Growth of decentralization and the principle of subsidiarity: African local democracy is still a fragile bud: Since the 90s, practically all stable countries in Africa have carried out decentralization reform policies that have led to the free election of local authorities in a majority of countries. More than 10,000 local governments emerged in Africa. The positive role of local democracy was demonstrated recently in several crises in West Africa (Côte d'Ivoire, Mali), where democratically elected local authorities were one of the main public institutions that ensure institutional continuity and answer to people's needs. Nevertheless the progress of local democracy is still in process and sometimes confronted with great difficulties. Many countries have promised local elections, but the process was suspended for many years or never implemented (Togo, Malawi). In other countries, decentralization concerns only a part of the country: some citizens have the right to democratically elect their local authorities although others do not.

The improvement of governance in Africa in the last twenty years is closely linked to the substantial public sector and state reforms, including the implementation of decentralization reform policies, applied in the end of the 80s and early 90s to overcome social and political crisis. Local democracy and decentralization emerges as a new approach towards governance in response to people's demands for democracy and regional claims for greater autonomy.

The Principle of Subsidiarity could be a strong underlying guide for decentralization and local governance. Decentralization of functions from the state to lower levels will increase as realization of the need to place responsibility for the provision of services to the level closest to where the services are needed becomes clearer and citizens demand for it. Recognition of this fundamental principle could assist in the harmonization of decentralization policies on the continent and improved congruence between functions and competences.

1.1 Growth of Regional Blocks: Africa will increasingly develop its regional blocks with some powers exercised beyond national boundaries. The pressures of globalization will inevitably lead to more regional integration becoming the logical choice for most of Africa. Thus, some state responsibilities will shift to the regional level. It is, thus, appropriate to recognize this development as some interventions post 2015 may be directed to the regional levels as well as the continental level at the African Union

2. Local governments and poverty reduction

Local governments have key roles in a range of public services that are important for poverty reduction. It is usually the mayor's office that local inhabitants congregate to voice their concerns and request for various supports to alleviate poverty. So much of the innovation in the last 20 years in improving and extending basic services to low-income populations has been by local governments in urban areas, and many times through partnerships with slum dwellers organizations.

The role that local governments play in addressing the key needs for alleviating poverty is well documented.

3. Bridging the Gap between Local Government Responsibilities and Resources

Increased responsibilities for local authorities, but a critical gap between tasks and resources remains a dark cloud over effective local governance. In the context of decentralization reforms, local authorities have gained increased responsibilities and powers in the delivery of basic services (infrastructures for schools, public health facilities, access to water and sanitation, waste management, etc), urban planning, social policies, environmental management and local economic development. Even when they have only partial responsibilities, local authorities are often blamed for the absence, insufficiency or inadequacy of basic services, because they represent the level closest to the people.

But in all areas, there is a significant imbalance between new responsibilities and resources that restrain the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. This weakness is reflected in the low ratio of local expenses to public expenditure: averaging near 8% for a majority of African countries (25% in Europe). This imbalance also concerns qualified human resources.

The imbalance in the distribution of resources and responsibilities restrict the delivery of basic services (one of the priorities identified of the Post-2015 Agenda in the Africa *MDGs Report 2012*, p. 134) and erode the role of local authorities which are nevertheless accountable to the people who elected them. This generates profound disappointments that threaten local democracy and, in turn, the foundations of democracy at national and regional levels.

4. Taking into cognizance rapid urbanization

Rapid Urbanization and metropolitan governance will be a major challenge in the new episode. The African continent is currently facing rapid urbanization, with the increase of one million plus cities and medium-sized towns, and to varying degrees, with the impoverishment of its suburbs, insufficiency of infrastructure and difficulty in delivery of basic urban services. The importance of rural-urban migration, urbanization of poverty or the impact of new environmental challenges (climate change adaptation, disaster risk prevention) have deep implications for local governance and are not well captured in the MDGs.

Increasing urbanization also creates a need for innovative mechanisms to govern and serve metropolitan areas that are growing in size, complexity and number. Developing solid intergovernmental relations and appropriate governance in metropolitan areas represents a daunting challenge because many different governments and public enterprises are typically involved in service provision within a metropolitan area. Local governments are key players in the building of this urban governance.

Furthermore, cities could potentially become real engines of growth. The growth of mega cities such as Johannesburg, Lagos, Cairo and Casablanca could also contribute to African integration as economic linkages between them increase.

To respond to this challenge, a fresh look at financing local authorities in the face of these added challenges will be required as well as improving partnership with national governments.

5. Strengthening Participatory Democracy and Accountability

Commensurate with the transfer of responsibilities and resources to local governments, there will be need to ensure that accountability and participatory democracy are well entrenched in the system. In Africa, as in other regions of the world, local authorities have developed innovative forms of citizen participation that contribute to renewing the approach of local democracy by ensuring that decisions and choices are not only **inclusive**, but **relevant and locally owned**.

Some of these innovative practices include: participatory budgeting or planning, village assemblies or "dialogue days" between local elected officers and communities, quotas reserved to ensure the representation of women, traditional authorities or certain minorities, the use of medias and new technologies to encourage participation, as well as different kinds of referendum or consultations, including with the possibility of recalling elected officials. Inspired by the experience of Porto Alegre (Brazil), more than one hundred and fifty municipalities in Africa have adopted different modalities of

participatory budgeting - in Cameroun, Cap-Vert, DRC, Kenya, Madagascar, Mozambique, South Africa, and Senegal.

However, considerable efforts are needed to strengthen local transparency, citizen participation and information, and control systems based on respect for local autonomy (accountability). Women's participation in local governments is also a way to develop a gender approach in local governance.

6. Summary of Recommendations

The performance of local governments as service providers and regulators of local service provision will significantly determine whether many of the MDG targets are met or can be met and, indeed, whether future development agenda can be achieved and sustained. Local governance and local development therefore constitute a nexus for responding to the challenges of poverty, inequality and sustainable environment.

The following summarizes the main recommendations for an inclusive approach to Governance dimensions in a Post-2015 Agenda in Africa:

- Governance should be recognized as a transversal theme of all MDGs framework
- The imperative of greater decentralization to local governments must be recognized. Creating an "enabling environment" is crucial in allowing local authorities to have decision-making powers and the means necessary to ensure the delivery of basic services and to allow them to contribute to local development and good governance. Effective decentralization is critical in building this "enabling environment". The basic guiding principle of subsidiarity must be promoted as a vehicle to strengthen democracy and service provision.
- The increasing strength of regional economic blocks in Africa and its impact on development must also be recognized.
- The progress of local democracy needs to be supported and secured as a cornerstone of local and national governance. A critical indicator would be the holding of local elections - all the citizens in the country have the right to elect their local authorities in periodical and regular democratic elections, measured by frequency and regular local elections and percentage of inhabitants of the country that have the right to elect through democratic ballots their local authorities.
- The distribution of resources and responsibilities between central and local governments needs to be clarified and balanced to allow local authorities to assume the tasks they are allocated and to be accountable to the people who elected them. An indicator that could be built into the post 2015 would be a measure of the share of resources between local and national governments – in order to ensure that local governments receive sufficient resources to assure their tasks and responsibilities on a regular basis, in particular the delivering of basic services to their communities, measured by local

government expenditure over global government expenditure at national level (collected by IMF)

- Urban governance needs an integrated approach, especially for large urban areas and intermediate cities. The consolidation of this multi-level governance framework places local authorities as prominent players in city governance.
- Strengthening the capacities and accountability in local governments is critical to reinforcing people's confidence in public institutions.
- Commensurate with the decentralization thrust, there will be need to strengthen mechanisms for accountability in local governments in order to ensure that there is public accountability for both public monies and performance.
- Strengthening gender equity in local governance strengthens democracy and must be encouraged through improving the participation of women in local councils.