

Local Authority Major Group Key Messages to the UNEP Governing Council 26 in February 2011

1) On the Green Economy

With over 50% of the global population now living in urban areas, and the 100 largest cities of the world alone contributing 30% to the global GDP, Local Authorities are important actors in bringing about the transition to a global green economy. Local Authorities welcome UNEP's Green Economy report, are moving towards Green Urban Economies and stand ready to further develop these activities.

We are living in an age of urbanization. In 1950, less than 1/3rd of the world's population lived in cities. Today, more than half of the global population does. By 2050, more than 2/3rds will be concentrated in urban areas. At the same time, the global population will increase. This means that the total urban population in 2050 is likely to be thoroughly the same as the current total population of the entire Planet.

In this scenario, by 2050, about 3 billion new urban inhabitants will need housing. This adds up to the need to renovate existing and build new urban infrastructures, such as transport and waste systems. Local, subnational and national governments have the opportunity to direct the related investments in a way that will contribute to a green economy.

The paths that cities choose to take in the next 40 years can make or break the global transition to a Green Economy. Local Authorities would like national governments to provide an enabling framework for Green Urban Economies.

2) On International Environmental Governance (IEG)

The Local Authorities Major Group calls on the 26th UNEP Governing Council to acknowledge the crucial role of Local Authorities towards the achievement of a Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. In order to transition to a Green Economy, an enhanced Global Environmental Governance is an essential tool. Global Environmental Governance constitutes an essential pillar of an efficient institutional framework for sustainable development.

Local and subnational authorities are often responsible for the development and implementation of laws, policies and strategies which contribute to sustainable development at all levels. Moreover local governments are the closest level of government to the citizens and therefore can ensure the inclusion and encourage the active participation of citizens in environmental governance. Besides, subnational and local governments are well placed to capitalize on the demand for action by citizens and translate it into concrete action quickly.

Governance, defined as the design and execution of policies, needs to run through all levels: from the local via the subnational and national to the global. Multilevel governance, as a condition for efficient policy making and implementation, implies interaction, synergy and complementarity between all levels.

Modern governance should recognize that the efforts and initiatives of nation states become stronger when transposed and complemented by local and subnational governments, as well as by key stakeholders. The important lessons being learned at the subnational and local levels can often feed into and enhance national policy.

Multilevel and multistakeholder Global Environmental Governance helps to turn the current and emerging environmental issues into opportunities. Such a positive interpretation generates hope and trust and requires strong leadership. The economic, social and environmental challenges we are facing are crying out for Global Environmental Governance as one pillar of an institutional framework for sustainable development adapted to the current times.