

Enhanced Cooperation among African Cities:

What agenda for the future?

Ladies and Gentlemen, All Protocol Observed,

Allow me first of all to thank the organizers of this African Capital Cities Sustainable Forum to have granted me the honour to address you around the theme “Enhanced Cooperation among African Cities”.

I am addressing this Forum in my capacity as the secretary general of the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLG-Africa) and I extend to you the greetings of the UCLG-A President, Mayor of Dakar, the capital City of Senegal. Our organisation gathers all national associations of local governments of Africa and the 2,000 main cities with a population above 100 000 inhabitants. Through its membership, UCLG-Africa represents around 350 millions African people. UCLG-A is headquarters in Rabat, Morocco, and has five regional offices in Cairo, Egypt, for North Africa; Abuja, Nigeria, for West Africa; Yaoundé, Cameroon, for Central Africa; Arusha, Tanzania, for East Africa; and Pretoria, South Africa, for Southern Africa.

Why city cooperation matters in Today's Africa?

Cities and Local governments are the level of governments closest to the citizen. In the course of its institutional development, any national government has an advantage in establishing a closer link to the citizen so that they can be better associated to the management of their own business. Local governments have been set up to primarily serve this purpose. But they are also more and more an autonomous level of governments thanks to the dynamic of urbanization. The rise of cities in the demographic and economic scenes is the most important change affecting people's life worldwide, including in Africa.

According to UN Habitat figures (cf. 2010 State of African Cities Report), Africa is home to a huge growth of her urban population, which rose from 205 million in 1990 to 412 million in 2010. It is estimated that the continent will have an urban population of 753 million by 2030, which means that it will have accommodated an additional population of 341 millions city dwellers between now and 2030, more than the today's total population of the USA. By 2030 Africa will have 70 cities with more than 1 million inhabitants (compared to 22 in 1990), and 10 cities with more than 5 million people. But this growth in major cities should not hide the fact that the global trend of African urbanization translates equally in a great number of city dwellers living in medium size and small

cities. The urban momentum is leading to a situation whereby, in demographic terms, the future of Africa will more and more be written mainly in the way her cities will be functioning. Therefore cooperation between African cities makes a lot of sense, and will ultimately have great impact on the way Africa will be living her urban future.

But another reason why city cooperation is useful stems from the role of cities in the growth of national economies. According to the World Bank, there is a strong correlation between urbanization and economic growth. Whenever the level of urban population reaches 30 per cent of the total population of any given country, the share of the GDP produced in cities amounts at least 60 percent. A study published in June 2012 by the McKinsey Global Institute signals that the top 600 cities in the world would generate 65 per cent of the world economic growth by 2030. Today these 600 cities are home to 20 per cent of the world population but generate more than half of the global GDP. Among the top 600 cities, a group of 440 cities from emerging markets will account close to half of expected global GDP growth from 2010 to 2030. China alone has 242 cities in that group, followed by Latin America, 57; South Asia including India, 36; Africa and the Middle East, 39. Globally this means that we are witnessing an economic shift of the contribution of cities in the world economic growth from developed to emerging markets, with the predominance of China. This means also that the growth and competitiveness of the national economies are more and more related to the way cities and local governments are resourced, equipped and managed. In fact managing urbanization is by and large primarily a local issue. Most of the time the efficacy in the management of urbanization depends on the entrepreneurial nature of local leaders and their capacity to identify growth potentials and investments opportunities. But the efficacy of local policies depends also on the quality and robustness of national policy frameworks defining the scope and margins of local initiatives in such areas as urban planning; land policy, strategic infrastructures location and building, investments attraction and approval authority, etc. These national policies are very diverse in Africa; and here there is space for institutional cooperation for city enabling environment between countries of Africa. UCLG Africa endeavored to put in place a CEE Ratings aiming assessing the way cities and local authorities are given room for maneuver and autonomy of decisions to address the urban challenge in the African context. The first report on CEE Ratings was launched at the occasion of the last Africities Summit held in Dakar, Senegal, in December 2012. An update CEE Rating Report will be released at the next Africities Summit to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, on 29 November to 3 December 2015.

After more than half a century of independence for most countries of the continent, the level of economic exchanges between them is dramatically low. Efforts are being made to improve trade across the continent, thanks to the actions driven by the Regional Economic Communities such as SADC or ECOWAS. But the reality is that the cooperation between African cities is hardly organized. Many African cities have developed partnership agreements with cities outside Africa and only few such partnerships are being implemented between African cities. It is expected that the development of

such cooperation agreements will translate into a trend of exchanges of goods, services and people that will only grow as time goes on. This trend will in turn put at the fore the human dimension of the African cities cooperation. Obviously trade and business imply human relations and if the relations are continuous and strong, they favor mutual migrations in the respective cities. Despite the fact that local authorities are not responsible for foreign affairs, it appears clearly city diplomacy is emerging as a critical dimension in the building peaceful relations between African peoples and countries. This is why it is important to boost city-to-city cooperation in Africa, including through trans-border decentralized cooperation. One should not underestimate the role of cities and local governments in humanizing the rather cold country-to-country external relations. One of the reasons why the dynamic of African integration is felt to be stalling is because cities and local governments were globally left out of it, which created a gap between the African Union and the African People. Fortunately this issue was recently addressed by the Conference of Heads of State and Government of the African Union at its meeting in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in July 2014, with the creation of a High Council of Local Authorities as an African Union institution, and the adoption of the African Charter on Values and Principles of decentralization, local governance and local development. Now starts the ratification process of the Charter, since the Charter will become an African Union instrument only if it is signed and ratified by at least 15 members of the African Union. So far only two countries have signed the Charter and none has ratified.

This been said, around which agenda can the cooperation among African cities be enhanced?

Towards a tentative agenda for an enhanced cooperation among African cities

Because cities are so important in the demographic and economic dynamic of the continent, their leaders have the responsibility to contribute to the agenda setting of any development policies and strategies concerning Africa. In order to do that, they should develop a platform for exchanging views on the priorities to put forward so that the concerns of African cities and local people are duly taken on board. The Africities Summits aim to play exactly this role, since they bring together ministers, mayors and local authorities, the business sector, the academia, the civil society organizations, the traditional rulers, the African Union institutions and the development partners. The theme chosen for the next seventh edition of the Africities Summit in Johannesburg is “Shaping the future of Africa with the People”. Through this theme the Summit wishes to contribute to populating the Agenda 2063 championed by the African Union, and at the same time help to ground this Agenda at the grassroots

level, so that through the mobilization of all the living forces of the continent, the Africa Vision 2063 has greater chance to materialize in reality.

But for any cooperation among African cities to have a meaningful impact it should address the following three main challenges facing African cities and local governments, the issue of financing and governance having been put aside: the challenge of integration and inclusion; the challenge of sustainability and resilience; the challenge of economic growth and job creation.

1. The challenge of integration and inclusion

Despite a slowdown observed in the recent period in the growth rate of cities in Africa, migrations from rural to urban areas and from poor regions to wealthier ones still characterize the urbanization dynamic. Managing migrations flows is becoming an integral part of local authorities mandate, and this will be more so not only for internal migrations within the country, but also for cross border migrations, which is new. Progress in the cooperation between cities of Africa will probably result in improved mobility of the concerned city dwellers. Some of the migrants will become residents and the quality of their welcoming and integration locally will on the long run determine the quality and long lasting overall cooperation relations between African countries and communities. In order to regulate how the respective migrants should be hosted it is recommendable that African cities define a Code of Conduct that sets out the way to welcome and host respective citizen, and that lays down the rights and responsibilities of the migrants. The discussion and adoption of such Code of Conduct should be one of the items on the agenda of the forthcoming High Council of Local Authorities, with the view, once it is adopted, to submit it to the AU Conference for consideration and inclusion among the instruments organizing cooperation relations between African countries.

Furthermore African cities are exposed to the threat of spatial and social divide and exclusion, with part of the city dwellers enduring poor urban conditions in informal settlements and slum areas. This threat is persistent in Africa where urban poverty is in the rise despite a decade long of economic growth. Some cities are doing better than others in the fight against poverty and to reduce poorly serviced urban neighborhoods. What lessons can be learnt from the their experience? Documenting the local governments' contribution to inclusive urban policies in Africa followed by a series of related workshops for exchange of experiences on this topic would be a good contribution to enhancing cooperation among African cities.

2. The challenge of sustainability and resilience.

One of the daunting emerging issues at global level is whether cities as engine of growth, will be sustainable and resilient or not. Given the share of Africa in the world urban population, one can say that part of the global battle for cities sustainability and resilience will be won or lost in African cities. First of all African cities should resist the temptation to copy the unsustainable consumption pace of natural resources witnessed in cities of the developed world. This will not be easy since most of the technologies available in response to the needs and demands of cities are largely inspired by the approaches and solutions implemented in cities of the developed world. Although it is becoming obvious that the ecological footprint of cities of the developed world is not sustainable, the upper and middle classes of cities in Africa aspire to have the same unsustainable way of life than their counterparts in the developed world. In such context, for the local leaders, implementing more energy and carbon efficient urban models will not be easy, unless these leaders can form a global coalition in favor of sustainable and resilient cities. I see the City of Tshwane contributing to setting up such a coalition, and I propose to open it up also to secondary cities. A special mention should be made here to the pressing needs of cities in Africa which development is linked to mining activities and which should be assisted in their efforts to master tools and skills that will allow them to acquire the needed knowledge in order to manage their natural resources in a sustainable manner and start preparing the reconversion of the economic base of their city after the mining activities are over. It is strongly recommended that the coalition define a program involving African mining cities and devote one of its line of interventions to this very critical issue. The Coalition could also take the lead in organizing mining cities network in order to initiate peer learning and mentoring processes among them at both political and professional levels.. The work of this coalition should be to gather expertise and intelligence that can help frame appropriate methodologies to urban planning and management in the context of rapidly growing cities, highlighting innovative approaches to land use with a view to increasing the city density and limit urban sprawl; to local housing policy which recognizes the diversity of the demands and responses, including for the poor; to more efficient local mobility and transport management systems with a focus on the development public transport; to disasters and risks management with more attention to early warning mechanisms and prevention measures, to cite but a few.

Furthermore, many weather-related risks are being exacerbated with climate change, hence the need to prepare cities to face those hazards. In this field, the cooperation among African cities could translate into the establishment of African Cities post disasters first help brigades that could be mobilized in case of hazards. The formation of such brigades should be voluntary and a testimony of the engagement of African cities to support each other when hit by hazards. Such brigades could benefit from the support of national governments and the sponsorship of the business sector. To come into life such initiative will probably need a champion. I propose here again that the City of Tshwane with its sister-cities in the Gauteng Province, be tasked to prepare a feasibility study and pilot project for the

implementation of the African cities first help brigades.

3. The challenge of economic growth, job creation and competitiveness

Despite the increase in trade and investments flows to Africa, the situation of the economic growth of the African cities and their capacity to create jobs and improve competitiveness remains a big challenge. Most of the Foreign Direct Investments are concentrated in the field of oil and gas, commodities, mines and big infrastructures and equipment. In fact 70% of the FDI in Sub Saharan Africa are concentrated in four countries: Angola, Ethiopia, Nigeria and South Africa. The attention to cities and their huge demands in roads, basic services, housing, public equipment... have not yet hit the radar of the most external investors as it should. These demands of cities represent a huge business opportunity, taking into account that by 2030 there will be almost 300 million city dwellers in Africa that will be part of the world consuming class with per capita revenues of around 10 dollars a day. It would be therefore interesting to focus attention of the cooperation among African cities on the need to adopt the perspective of the circular economy when addressing the challenge of economic growth and job creation in Africa. Circular economy is defined as an economy where production, consumption and trade are designed to minimize the net extraction of key resources such as fossil fuels, raw material, water, land, environment, so as to minimize, track and hopefully eliminate waste through careful design and management. The circular economy perspective underlines that any approach to investment in African cities should not be implemented in the ignorance and at the expense of existing social capital, in particular in informal settlements and poor neighborhood. Instead, it argues that any economic investments should be implemented using the existing city's social capital so as to ensure their full ownership by the citizen. But obviously there is need to scale up the level and quality of infrastructure and equipment in African cities, otherwise there is no way these cities can fully contribute to the economic growth.

Another issue that is causing headaches to most of local and national leaders is the problem of youth unemployment. In principle Africa is experiencing what experts call the "demographic dividend" with a large number of young people entering the labor market and provoking a rise in the demand for investment levels, productivity and competitiveness. Unfortunately in Africa the youth labor force is not skilled enough to take advantage of the opportunities that are there, and there is a risk that these unemployed young people are enrolled in criminal activities or serve the political elite in the propaganda activities during elections, that might result in social crisis when promises made to them are not fulfilled. Given the importance of a peaceful environment for any development endeavor, it is critical that African cities find credible solutions to youth unemployment before it is too late. Three avenues can be explored to this end as suggested by Professor Edgar Pieterse from the African Centre

for Cities, University of Cape Town, South Africa: (1) create labor-intensive jobs to install, maintain and revitalize urban infrastructure and public facilities; (2) develop social jobs for home-based care needs; (3) create environmental services jobs including cleansing the city, collecting and recycling garbage, replenishing degraded city's ecosystems, etc. it is highly desirable that the cooperation pays attention to this very vital issue for African cities. Here dedicated programs can be developed in the framework of city-to-city cooperation that would include not only the three aforementioned areas for youth employment, but also other elements aiming at boosting local economic development using local entrepreneurs from both sides with the cities playing a brokerage role.

At the end any sustainable management of African cities will be linked to the capacities of these cities to generate wealth and mobilize resources through taxation or user fees for local services. The Forum should also be a platform to exchange experiences on resources mobilization and local governance.

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