

## **AFRICAN DAY OF DECENTRALIZATION AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT 2020**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AFRICAN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS**

UCLG Africa organized a webinar on 10 August 2020 under the theme selected by the African Union, “**The contribution of Local Authorities to conflict prevention and peacekeeping on the Continent,**” to celebrate the African Day of Decentralization and Local Development. The webinar was attended by 140 people representing more than 50 countries both in and outside Africa.

The official opening ceremony heard speeches by **Mr. Léandre Nzué**, President of UCLG Africa (read by **Mr. Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi**, Secretary General of UCLG Africa), **Mr. Mohamed Boudra**, President of UCLG World, President of the Moroccan Association of Presidents of Communal Councils (AMPCC) and Mayor of the City of Al Hoceima (Morocco), **Mr. Mohand Laenser**, President of the Association of Regions of Morocco (ARM), President of the Council of the Region of Fez -Meknès (Morocco), and **Mr. Saâd Benmbarek**, President of the Moroccan Association of the Councils of Prefectures and Provinces (AMPCPP), President of the Council of the Prefecture of Rabat, Morocco.

For the President of UCLG Africa, the decision by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union to annually celebrate the African Day of Decentralization and Local Development on August 10 reflects their desire to make decentralization a model of public governance in African countries. *“By adopting the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development in June 2014, our Heads of State and Government sent a clear message that public authorities now have two components: one national and one local. One of the essential conditions for launching the dynamics of sustainable development in Africa is the imperative to silence the guns on the continent. We believe that local authorities are in the front line both for conflict prevention and for the treatment of post-conflict situations, hence the importance of involving them. The two panels that we will have will deal with two major requests from local authorities in the area of peace and security on our continent: We call for the involvement of local and subnational governments in the early warning system on conflicts put in place through the African Union, and we call for the systematic involvement of local and subnational governments in post-conflict situations to build peace between communities. I hope that the deliberations of this webinar will help us to see the indispensable role of local authorities in conflict prevention in Africa,”* Mr. **Léandre Nzué**.

**Mr. Mohamed Boudra** congratulated UCLG Africa for this celebration in his capacity, *“as President of the great family of local authorities of the world but also as an African, this day is an opportunity to take stock of decentralization. I stand in solidarity with the communities of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso which have recently suffered terrorist attacks. We must convince our governments every day, of the importance of achieving the United Nation’s Agenda 2030 and the African Union’s s Agenda 2063. It is obvious that local and subnational governments play a daily role in resolving different types of conflicts by producing the services needed by the populations and by practicing a community-based policy, the fight against racism and xenophobia and the fight against social exclusion against immigrant.”*

**Mr. Mohand Laenser** stated that local and subnational governments were the first to suffer from conflicts. *“Underdevelopment, poverty, illiteracy, and marginalization are all issues that foster conflicts. As managers of local authorities, our role is extremely important in all areas. If development is present, 80% of the causes of conflicts will be eradicated.”*

**Mr. Saâd Benmbarek**, underlined the importance of tackling the situation of street children. *“We cannot build peace with 30 million children walking the streets of Africa. These children are sometimes part of the rebels. In this sense, I would like to salute the campaign of African Cities without Street Children launched during the Africities 8 Summit in Marrakech in November 2018 by REFELA (Network of Local Elected Women of Africa) and having as a sponsor Her Royal Highness Princess Lalla Meryem.”*

### **Tribute to the late Dr. Alioune Badiane**

The webinar participants observed a minute of silence in memory of Dr. Alioune Badiane, former Director of UN-Habitat for Africa, who died in Dakar on July 31. Dr. Alioune Badiane was the one of the most influential advocates of the New Urban Agenda in Africa and supported the vision and causes of UCLG Africa as Special Adviser. A commemoration in his honor was organized on 04 August 2020 by UN-Habitat. A second commemoration is scheduled for Thursday, 13 August 2020 at 11:00 a.m. Rabat time (UTC + 1).

### **Introductory Report: Promoting the constructive resolution of disputes and conflicts in Africa.**

An introductory presentation was made by **Dr. Vasu Gounden**, Founder and Executive Director of the African Center for Constructive Dispute Resolution (ACCORD) who addressed the theme, *“Promoting the constructive resolution of disputes and conflicts in Africa.”*

He noted that several African countries were at a turning point in their history, given that the continent was facing rapid urbanization, unlike other continents that had experienced progressive urbanization in response to the need for labor in their factories or industries. The African continent is not industrialized: it is 60% rural 40% urban, of which 20% live in the urban center and 20% in the under-resourced but rapidly expanding suburbs. The proportion of urban and rural dwellers is expected to reverse by mid-century, i.e. in less than 30 years. This rapid urban growth is taking place as Africa faces the following major problems, to which it has failed to provide appropriate solutions so far, namely, lack of job creation, unsustainable growth, growing inequalities, the continued growth of extreme poverty, lack of investment in critical infrastructure, poor structure of its economies, poor governance with weak or non-existent institutions, and the emergence of new conflicts and terrorism.

On the continent, the main sources of conflict surround constitutional crises, election-related conflicts, access to resources (land, water, food, education, health, employment), and identity-related conflicts (ethnic, religious, racial). The prevention of these conflicts at the local and national levels is a high priority and measures need to be taken to strengthen the mediation capacity of local authorities and their capacity to create and strengthen an atmosphere of peace and harmony in the constituencies within their jurisdiction.

*“With the Covid-19 pandemic, most cities, especially larger ones, are experiencing a health crisis. This precipitated the economic crisis. Most nations will go into recession and for*

*Africa it will be a real economic depression. There will be constitutional crises, including in my own country, South Africa. There will be conflicts over water and land, conflicts linked to arms trafficking and conflicts linked to ethnicity. Our forecast is that during the next decade, conflicts will no longer be so much at country level but at the city level. People leave the villages for cities that are not urbanized, which have no water and not enough schools. In the next decade, conflicts will take place in cities and this is why the theme of today's celebration is important. Confrontation in the streets will be a disaster, therefore prevention at local and national level must be a top priority.” warned Dr. Gouden.*

Following this presentation, two panels were organized, one on the involvement of local authorities in the African Union's early warning system on conflicts and the other one on the involvement of local authorities in the management of post-conflict situations and the preservation of lasting peace.

**Panel 1: The involvement of Local Governments in the Early Warning System on Conflicts set up by the African Union.”**

Participants shared experiences and examples of best practice with presentations made by:

- **Mr. Marcel Baglo**, Director General of the Beninese Agency for Integrated Management of Border Areas (ABGIEF) on the prevention and decentralized management of cross-border conflicts between Benin and Nigeria;
- **Mr. Bilubi Ulengabo Méschac**, Mayor of the City of Bukavu, President of the Association of Mayors and Local Authorities of Countries of the Great Lakes Sub-Region, on the conflict prevention mechanisms developed by the mayors of cities of member countries of the Great Lakes community (Burundi, Uganda; DRC, Rwanda, Tanzania);
- **Mr. David Alabi Kolade**, President of the Association of Local Governments of Nigeria (ALGON) on the role of local authorities in Nigeria in the prevention and treatment of conflicts related to access to resources;
- **Mr. Yamadou Diallo** of the Near East Foundation (NEF) in Mali on the monitoring strategies put in place for the detection of tensions and their treatment in the region of Mopti in Mali;
- **General Khaled Abdel Aal**, Governor of Cairo, about the need for the involvement of local authorities in the detection and treatment of sources of tension in order to avoid the move to open conflicts which threaten social peace;
- **Mr. Michel Cibot**, Delegate General and Initiator of the French Association of Communes, Departments and Regions for Peace (AFCDRP-Mayors for Peace, France), French branch of the International Network of Mayors for Peace, founded by the Mayors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, on the theme of, “75 years after the first atomic weapons, how to think about the future. ” which called for the creation of local action programs for a culture of peace (PLACP), the aim of which is to implement a responsible and united management of local governments which is adapted to local realities.

**Panel 2: Role and effective involvement of Local and Subnational Governments in the management of post-conflict situations and the return to lasting peace.**

The second Panel had the following presentations:

- **Mr. Emile Gros- Raymond Nakombo**, Mayor of the city of Bangui (Central African Republic), who presented the architecture of transitional justice and the consultation mechanisms put in place which facilitated an inclusive dialogue in favor of the return to lasting peace in the Central African Republic, a dialogue during which local authorities played an essential role.
- **Mr. Oscar Escobar**, Mayor of the city of Palmira (Colombia) who dealt with the global strategy for the prevention of violence in his city, insisting that local authorities propose an institutional offer to counter the risks of falling into the violence that threatens young people, especially in the poorest neighborhoods;
- **Mrs. Theresa SANOU Forohouyé**, sociologist (Côte d'Ivoire), who presented the model of cooperation between public authorities and communities to develop infrastructure for peace at the local level and the experience of the locality of Bangolo (West of Côte d'Ivoire);
- **Mr. Hussein Dhwadi** and **Dr. Mohamed El Harari**, respectively President and Secretary General of the National League of Municipalities of Libya who presented the case of Libyan municipalities, which must organize themselves to advocate for peace while the country is in the throes of an open crisis where parties are fighting for the control of state institutions;
- **Professor Allan Rosenbaum**, President of the American Society for Public Administration (ASPA), who spoke about how local governments could prevent conflict and rebuild peace in post-conflict contexts, emphasizing the engagement of civil society, local leadership, external interventions, good governance at the local level, commitment to local economic development to prevent conflicts, the need to involve all actors and stakeholders, the commitment and involvement of women and young people, the fight against poverty, good governance, quality public services, as well as investment in talents, resources and skills to rebuild peace;
- **Ms. Tomoko Vazeer**, Program Analyst for Arab States at the UNDP Regional Center based in Amman, who presented the UNDP experience in mobilizing young people and their association and participation in local mechanisms for the consolidation of peace within communities.

**The conference was also an opportunity to listen to two experiences of civil society engagement.** **Ms. Mylène Kamara Soro** highlighted the contribution of the West African Peacebuilding Network (WANEP) to peaceful elections in 2020 in Côte d'Ivoire and **Mr. Jean Paul Nanfack** underlined the type of support necessary to secure peace and accelerate development, by highlighting the work of the African Coordination of Mayors for Peace and Development (CAMPAD) from its headquarters in **Cameroon**.

Following the two panels, a rich debate was initiated by the participants in the webinar, from which **Mr. Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi**, Secretary General of UCLG Africa, drew the following ten conclusions:

- 1) The theme of this webinar is timely not only because it fits with the African Union's vision of making 2020 the year in which people should, "Silence guns to create conditions conducive to Africa's development," but also because lasting peace is essential for sustainable development and vice versa;
- 2) The outlook for the future was not really favorable to Africa unless we are able to take the necessary decisions now to stop the dynamics of the multiplication of crises and conflicts on the continent;
- 3) Structural and cyclical circumstances present significant constraints, not only with climate change, which seriously accelerates competition for access to natural resources within communities, creating conditions for the multiplication of tensions and conflicts, but also with the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has not only caused difficulty in daily life, especially of the most disadvantaged, but will also lead to an economic recession in developed and emerging countries. As seen in developed countries, this will result in a real economic depression in Africa, unless the continent has the courage to completely rethink its development model;
- 4) Cities and territories will face many tensions and will be the theater of violence fueled by the rejection of inequalities, the quest for survival for the most destitute people and the lack of prospects for young people;
- 5) To avoid the transformation of tensions between communities into open and violent conflicts, it is preferable to deal with them at the level of groups and communities living in cities and territories on the initiative of local public authorities in accordance with requests by UCLG Africa to see local authorities included in the African Union's early warning system on conflicts, and to be intimately involved in the management of post-conflict situations;
- 6) There is a body of knowledge and experiences available on the continent which should be better shared, and whose effectiveness is linked to their inclusive, contextual and innovative approach. It appears of the utmost importance to strengthen the capacities of agents and executives of local authorities in matters of mediation and conflict prevention. The Memorandum of Understanding signed between UCLG Africa and ACCORD aims to meet this need;
- 7) Young people are often the legs and arms, or even the soldiers and the main target of violence. To be successful, any conflict prevention strategy must first and foremost target the youth and strive to close the door on criminal life and to open the door to opportunities for a peaceful life;
- 8) It is impossible to build lasting peace within the community and society if women are not the cornerstone of this construction, especially in informal settlements. It has been observed everywhere that women are agents of peace and of the construction of human and social capital. It is therefore strongly recommended to systematically resort to their involvement and participation in command positions in any peacebuilding architecture, especially at the community level;

9) Laws on decentralization on the continent must facilitate local and regional governments access to the financial and human resources necessary for them to intervene effectively in the field of conflict prevention and the management of post-conflict situations;

10) It is necessary for African local authorities to work together and to set up a network of cities and territories in Africa for the prevention of conflicts and for the preservation of peace. This network must collaborate with other networks of cities and territories around the world that pursue the same objectives, such as the Network of Mayors for Peace, or that of The Hague Academy for Peace.

.....

### **Signing of the MoU between UCLG Africa and the ACCORD Center**

The webinar also saw the remote signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between UCLG Africa and the ACCORD Center. This partnership aims to involve local and subnational governments in conflict prevention and the preservation of peace in Africa. The document was signed respectively by **Mr. Jean Pierre Elong Mbassi**, Secretary General of UCLG Africa and **Dr. Vasu GOUNDEN**, Founder and Executive Director of the African Center for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes (ACCORD).

*“It is a partnership that we have been planning for almost a year. It is important to train local governance leaders in conflict resolution mechanisms for maintaining peace in Africa. It is very important that the leaders of the African Union listen to the message of the local and subnational governments and of UCLG Africa, namely that the leaders of the cities and territories of Africa are ready to collaborate in the maintenance of peace in Africa, because without a sustainable peace there is little chance to implement Agenda 2063 of the Africa We Want,” Mr. Elong Mbassi.*

**Dr. Vasu** expressed his satisfaction to see the partnership sealed, *“I would like to reiterate our commitment to support African local authorities in training and strengthening their capacities in the area of conflict prevention, reduction and resolution. I will convey your message to His Excellency Mr. Ramaphosa who is the current President of the African Union. National governments cannot ignore the role that cities and local authorities will play in conflict management. Ms Graça Machel, President of our Executive Board, is very pleased with the signing of this agreement.”*

### **For further information please contact:**

**Gaëlle Yomi:** Tel: + 212 610 56 71 45

**e- mail:** [gyomi@uclga.org](mailto:gyomi@uclga.org)