
Statement of UCLG Africa Secretary General

At the CoGs webinar

**Your Excellency Mr. President,
Your Excellency Mr. Ambassador of Japan in Kenya,
Your Excellency High Representative of UNDP in Kenya,
Members of Parliament,
Honorable Ministers,
Honorable Governors,
Directors, Experts,
All Protocol Observed,**

I am speaking here as the Secretary General of the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa, UCLG Africa, the continental umbrella organization gathering the community of subnational and local governments from across Africa, headquartered in Rabat, the capital city of the Kingdom of Morocco, where it was granted the diplomatic status as a Pan African international organization.

I thank the organizers and particularly the Chairperson of the Council of County Governors of Kenya for having invited UCLG Africa to participate in this very important virtual meeting chaired by the Head of State of Kenya in person. I am humbled, Sir.

Your Excellency Mr. President,
Dear Participants,

Allow me first of all to bow down before the memory of the victims of the COVID-19 pandemic in Kenya, and present the sincere condolences of the members and leaders of UCLG Africa to the bereaved families and counties who'd lost their parents, citizens or colleagues and friends. Let me extend the condolences of UCLG Africa to the people and the government of Kenya. We join the prayers of all those who wish eternal rest to those who have left us behind as a result of this pandemic.

Your Excellency Mr. President,
Dear Participants,

We know how early and how effectively Kenya organized itself to deal with this terrible disease. We have seen how the quality of the Public Power Pack formed by the national and county governments working hand in hand has been essential in mobilizing all means and actors to counter the pandemic. This shows that Kenya was right to embark on the policy of devolution of power to the county governments. The results speak for themselves in many areas, not only in the fight

against the COVID-19 pandemic. More fundamentally, the policy of devolution has helped to strengthen the legitimacy of public power, and to embed democracy and citizenship in Kenya, making it a leading pilgrim among countries that have established a political and institutional environment conducive to subnational and local government initiatives and actions. Kenya is to be commended for this achievement.

Kenya should however pursue this achievement by being among the countries that contribute to the entry in force of the African Charter of the values and principles of decentralization, local governance and local development adopted by the heads of State and Government of the African Union at their conference held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, in June 2014. To date the Charter has been signed by 18 AU member states, and ratified by 6 AU member states, who also deposited the instruments at the African Union Commission. Kenya is not yet among the signatory and ratifying countries. Knowing that to become a full African Union legal instrument, the Charter shall be signed and ratified by at least 15 countries that have deposited the instruments at the African Union Commission. We take the liberty to call on you, Excellency Mr. President, for Kenya to sign and ratify this Charter as soon as possible.

Your Excellency Mr. President,
Dear Participants,

At their last triennial continental meeting also known as the Africities Summit, which 8th edition was held in Marrakesh, Morocco, on 20 to 24 November 2018, and that brought together over 8,000 participants from all over Africa and the rest of the world, the leaders of subnational and local governments of Africa decided that the 9th edition of the Africities Summit will take place in Kisumu, Kenya, on 16 to 20 November 2021. This is the very first time that the Summit will be held not in a capital city or large city, but in a mid-level city. The theme chosen for the Africities Summit in Kisumu is : "speeding up the achievement of Agenda 2030 and Agenda 2063 in Africa: what role for African intermediary cities?"

Your Excellency Mr. President,
Dear Participants,

Since its formation in 2002 and despite the fact that Africa is the region that is urbanizing the most in the world, the African Union has never put the topic of the role of cities in the development and integration of Africa and in the implementation of Agenda 2063 among the agenda items of the annual conference of heads of State and government. It is imperative that a reflection is conducted on this very important topic because as we all know, by 2050, 30 years from now, the majority of Africans will be living in cities. Therefore the future of Africa is from now on intrinsically related to the way African cities will be attractive, competitive, inclusive, safe, sustainable and well managed. The management of cities and territories deserves foresight thinking at all levels of government, from local and national levels, to regional and Pan African levels.

Your Excellency Mr. President, Sir,

It is our sincere wish that you champion the idea of an African Union conference of heads of State and Government on the role of cities in Africa's development and integration. This is long overdue. The organization of the Africities Summit in Kisumu in 2021 offers a good step in the right direction for this foresight reflection on African cities.

Your Excellency Mr. President,
Dear Participants,

Organizing the next Africities Summit in Kisumu is however a challenge for several reasons:

First of all, it is the first time that such a summit is not held in the capital city or a large city, but in an intermediary level city. Given the number of participants that the Africities Summit usually attracts, it is a major logistical challenge to prepare Kisumu to welcome in good conditions more than 5,000 expected participants, the bet being that by then the pandemic will be behind us.

The second challenge is that of strategic thinking. For the first time, the question of the attention that must be paid to intermediary level cities is put on the table, because intermediary cities are the level of territorial governance where the promises proclaimed by the State, of improving and modernizing the life of the population and improve democratic public governance are seriously questioned. It is at this level as well that the post-colonial state must rebuild its legitimacy vis-à-vis its citizens. And the sooner the better if one is concerned by the role of intermediary cities in developing solid local and regional economies, contributing to spreading out state building, and to the entrenchment of the rule of law all over the country.

The third challenge is that of timing and resources. Organizing a Summit of this importance requires a lot of preparation time, let alone efforts to mobilize needed financial and other resources. Mr. President, we are concerned that the Africities Summit in Kisumu in 2021 will be an even more resounding success than the Africities Summit hosted in Nairobi in 2006. This is why we are appealing to you to ensure that the conditions for its successful preparation and organization are rapidly met. We are just over 12 months away from the Summit, and it is high time to accelerate its preparation. UCLG Africa is in any case ready to contribute its expertise to ensure the success of the Summit, but this success depends above all on the commitment and mobilization of the Kenyan people and authorities at the highest level.

Mr. President, we are counting on you to ensure that this mobilization is quickly effective.

Finally, Mr. President, we are taking advantage of your presence on this webinar to inform you that UCLG Africa has requested the Government of Kenya to host its regional office for East Africa in Nairobi. We would like to be able to count on your support for this request to be accepted.

On behalf of the members and leadership of UCLG Africa, we reiterate our congratulations to the Government of Kenya under your leadership, and to the county governments for the quality of your

collective response to the pandemic, which provides further demonstration of the importance of multi-level cooperative governance for effective implementation of public policies.

The pandemic has also served as a reminder of the urgency to pay more attention to preventive medicine as opposed to curative medicine which has tended to take precedence in public health policy in recent years. COVID-19 is an ecosystem disease. It raises the question of the balance of the relationship between man and his natural environment at a time when the planet is facing the effects of climate change. It is therefore urgent to rethink the economic model and consumption patterns so that we transit towards more sustainable development. Africa is compelled to show the way as it is the region which development pattern is less dependent of high consumption of fossil energy. It is also the region of the world less embedded in the globalized economy, while being at the same time the continent with the youngest population in the world and this having the potential of becoming the innovation force of the coming period. We are convinced time for Africa to retrieve her leading role as the cradle of humanity is now.

Your Excellency Mr. President,
Dear Participants,

We wish good, insightful, and fruitful deliberations to the participants in this webinar, and thank you for your kind attention.

Jean Pierre ELONG MBASSI

Secretary General

