Conseil des Communes et Régions d'Europe
Council of European Municipalities and Regions

Celebrating 60 years of local and regional Europe
L'Europe des territoires fête ses 60 ans

Regional Preparatory Meeting for
The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)

01 - 02 December 2011, Geneva

Agenda Item 7: The institutional framework for sustainable development

Contribution on behalf of the Local Authority Major Group

Introductory statement:

Local Governments are the level of government closest and most responsive to the needs of their citizen.

Local governments are crucially important to steer sustainable development. They provide and manage key services (water, energy, waste, sanitation, public transport, safety and health, administration, education et cetera), regulate building codes and land-use, prepare plans, align political interests and respond to public pressures, and leverage, align and allocate large amounts of investments.

More and more, local governments are organising their tasks according to the principles of sustainable development.

Proposals for Local Governments' engagement in the decision-making process at national level:

- Independent, multi-level, multi-stakeholder and well resourced sustainable development **Commissions** should be created **at national level** and encouraged at sub-national level. They would assist in elaborating inter-ministerial over-arching sustainable development strategies, seek compliance of public policies with sustainable development goals and help reduce negative impacts of policy fragmentation.
- **Local Governments** need to find ways to capitalise the results of global studies and how they can implement strategies of sustainable development. This means e.g. encouraging cooperation between cities and with research institutes and universities.

Proposals for Local Governments' engagement in the decision-making process at international level:

- It is important that the key role of local governments as policy and development actors is recognized by the global community: Local and other sub-national governments need to be allocated the status of "**governmental stakeholders**" in order to recognise the governmental nature of Federated States, Regions, Cities and Local Authorities:
- Their commitment to sustainable development, their broad experience in consultation processes and cooperation with stakeholders can be a valuable contribution to international negotiations and policies;
- Any future institutional framework for sustainable development should be based on a **multi-level governance** system to ensure shared ownership and commitment in the elaboration and implementation of sustainable development polices;

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Proposals for regional cooperation:

- The **UN Environment Programme** UNEP should be strengthened and upgraded to a fully resourced Specialised Agency with a comprehensive mandate covering all international sustainable development instruments and
    - focusing on mainstreaming sustainable development concerns into UN bodies;
    - centralising all sustainable development initiatives and relevant existing bodies within the UN
    - liaise with an independent intergovernmental panel of sustainability experts;
    - consolidating information, and knowledge;
    - putting forward proposals for international binding measures, and
    - alerting the international community about breaches of SD policies and instruments.

  This Agency should be vested with a strong monitoring and control system.
- The UN Commission for Sustainable Development (UN CSD) should be upgraded into a **UN Council for Sustainable Development** and have a stronger monitoring and control mandate, including the elaboration of recommendations to UN members and the scrutiny of the initiatives of any UN body related to sustainable development.
- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is in operation and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) was just created. Each Panel forms the **interface between science and policy** for their area of focus. Sound political decisions on sustainable development issues require a solid scientific base, making these two Panels highly important and useful.
- Yet, we advocate for the creation of a new **'Intergovernmental Panel on Sustainable Development'** with a holistic and long-term mission to ensure that our planet can offer decent living conditions today and for future generations. This Panel should be the overarching body for IPCC, IPBES and any other relevant science/policy bodies.

Closing remark:

We believe that the Rio+20 Conference provides a unique opportunity to establish a **multi-level governance system for sustainable development** with a **multi-stakeholder approach,** making the UN become the forum where not only national governments discuss and take decisions, but where all levels of government and further relevant actors meet, exchange and prepare a sustainable development for us and future generations. Local and other sub-regional governments are prepared to join this new Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development as governmental stakeholders.