

SIXTH SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT ASSEMBLY (UNEA-6)

26 FEBRUARY TO 1 MARCH 2023

NAIROBI, KENYA

OPENING STATEMENT

DELIVERED BY: DR. MAGASH NAIDOO (ICLEI - LOCAL GOVERNMENTS FOR SUSTAINABILITY) AS CO-FOCAL POINT OF THE LOCAL AUTHORITIES MAJOR GROUP

Madam President of UNEA-6, Madam Executive Director, your Excellencies.

We would like to thank Member States for their engagement towards strengthening the role of local and subnational governments during the OECPR, and the effective moderation of the Cluster discussions by the Co-facilitators. It would be remiss of us, if we didn't also thank the Civil Society Unit and the whole secretariat.

As the Local Authorities Major Group, we welcome most of the resolutions, especially on protecting biodiversity for future generations, and the transition towards a resource sustainable and circular future. However, we have to resoundingly lodge our apprehension on Solar Radiation Modification and particularly in terms of experimentation and use. The risks of any geoengineering currently outweigh the benefits and ultimately does not address the underlying issue, which includes unsustainable production and consumption. In addition, resolutions on water, nature-based solutions and air pollution are very important for our constituencies and we will continue to follow them.

As we heard from Mayor Belmonte, the third Cities and Regions Summit was hosted in parallel to the OECPR. We heard from city and subnational leaders from Quebec, California, Freetown, Cape Town, Barrenquilla, Quezon City, Kiambu County in Kenya and many others. This Summit together with what we heard at the GMGSF during this past weekend only serves to reinforce our concerns and need to contribute to solutions. These points inhibit coherent and effective sustainability actions at the closest level of government to the people, the people that give all of us in this room our mandates.

These points are:

We see an acute lack of an integrated and multilateral policy approach being included in resolutions. As Local Authorities we have witnessed the complications that arise from policy misalignment. Having one change in a regulatory system, without changing linked policies, strategies, or laws will result in a lack of a conducive regulatory environment for implementation. We owe impact and efficient implementation to our people and for that we need a 'whole of government' approach. This is an approach that is developed under the Global Task force, and through the United Nations Advisory Group for Local and Regional Governments of the UN Secretary General.

We have observed with hope the increase in the usage of terminologies, such as equity, social cohesion, Just Transition and Human Rights. This is welcomed, and we urge consideration of the 'how'. How will we ensure that we see these concepts materialize for people that are most vulnerable?

We urge Member States to take this into account, as our local and subnational leaders have a vast amount of knowledge, expertise and insights to help solve close to the ground problems

that result in national priorities. We all want and need the same thing, a sustainable environment and planet for our future generations.

We would like to end by offering our full support, insights and expertise to Member States to advance a just transition, the circular economy, climate and other environmental opportunities for a sustainable planet. Thank you.