

# Draft Statement

## Reporting back at the Opening Plenary of the UNEA-6

### Mayor Joy Belmonte

**Date and Time:** Monday, 26 February 2024, 10:00 – 13:00 EAT (Exact time of intervention is not set)

**Venue:** Nairobi, Kenya, United Nations compound, Conference Room 2

Madam President, Excellencies, distinguished delegates, and observers,

I am very pleased to address you at the Sixth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly.

Addressing the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and waste requires collaboration between different levels of government and active engagement from stakeholders.

Over half of the global population resides in cities, where the impact of climate change and pollution is most pronounced due to high population density, heat island effect, and intense resource utilization. While cities were once seen primarily as contributors to the triple crisis, they are now recognized as crucial actors in resolving the crisis.

The UNEA-6 Cities and Regions Summit, held on February 23, 2024, at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, witnessed substantial participation, with over five hundred attendees from numerous countries online and in-person.

In unison, voices from local municipalities to regional bodies, national governments, and international organizations resoundingly underscored the importance of working together, including local communities and the private sector.

The Summit also emphasized the urgency for enhanced international environmental governance to combat the triple planetary crisis. It called for the stronger involvement of subnational governments in the implementation of the many Multilateral Environmental Agreements, following the best practices that we are seeing in the Paris Climate Agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity.

- Under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), Plan of Action on Subnational Governments, Cities and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity, was established and is being implemented.
- Under the Paris Agreement, the recent launch of the Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships (CHAMP) for Climate Action, is an important step towards promoting a multilevel governance in implementing the Global Climate Agreement.

The summit also welcomed other recent COP-28 commitments, such as the Subnational commitments to the Global Cooling Pledge, and the Buildings Breakthrough initiative; and the new Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and associated decision on the

engagement of local and subnational governments to enhance implementation of this Framework (Decision 15/12).

We heard from Cape Town, Barcelona, Freetown, Warsaw, Quebec, California and others inspiring examples of how they are implementing concrete actions on the ground and the challenges they face. The Summit participants expressed their hopes that countries will involve local and regional authorities in implementing resolutions, including the anticipated international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution.

National government representatives, from Colombia, France, Brazil, Cambodia and the United-States of America highlighted how important subnational action is important to the achievement of their national goals. The Summit encouraged all Member States to establish national institutional arrangements for subnational government participation and provide tailored resources for their implementation needs.

Despite the potential of local governments to address the triple planetary crisis, they often lack sufficient resources. The global requirement for urban infrastructure investment exceeds 4.5 trillion dollars annually, with up to 27 per cent needed for low-emission and climate-resilient infrastructure. Cities require new financial mechanisms and governance systems to scale up actions rapidly over the next two decades to meet climate goals.

Participants highlighted the potential of innovative financing mechanisms, such as public private partnerships, guarantee mechanisms for cities; and the success of ongoing initiatives, including the GEF Sustainable Cities Programme, Catalytic Finance, Generation Restoration and many others. The next step is to bring these pilots and innovation to scale to achieve our goals.

Finally, the Summit emphasized the importance of strong collaborative arrangements between UN agencies, international organizations, city networks, and individual cities and regions, including through the Major Group system, the Greener Cities Partnership coordinated by UNEP and UN-Habitat, and other global and regional initiatives.

We eagerly anticipate productive discussions at UNEA-6. With your leadership, we can build resilient and sustainable cities to realize the world we aspire to.

Cities host 55 per cent of the world's people and are responsible for 70 per cent of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions – working with cities and regions together to address their environmental and climate challenges will support achieving the global environmental goals.

Thank you for your attention.