



Statement by
Gino Van Begin, Secretary General of ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability
at the opening of the 2022 Annual Retreat of
Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments

Dear representatives of local and regional governments, dear colleagues of networks, dear partners, ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to address you at the opening of our 2022 Annual Retreat of the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments, which for the first time takes place in a hybrid format.

Although this day is a dark day given the developments in Ukraine, our meeting here is important.

With today's meeting, we wish to inform you, prepare you and agree with you on how to prioritize and best coordinate our representational and advocacy work in yet another complex and busy year.

At the outset; let us remember that the advocacy and the involvement of local and regional governments in the global debates are not a finite goal on itself. It is rather the vehicle to accelerate our joint commitment and actions to transform our cities and regions towards more sustainability, equity, democracy.

As such, our relations with the United Nations and relevant processes must be considered- not in isolation- but in the realities of the current global politics and dynamics.

As of 2022, the world has gone through two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, and climate change is escalating to an emergency level, with both these processes being experienced unequally across the world.

Whilst some with unlimited financial resources are testing new frontiers in space and the virtual world, others are experimenting with the geopolitical highs and lows of new types of conflict and war.

Under these conditions, those like us -who believe in the value and power of solidarity and living in harmony with each other and nature- have a daunting task; bringing humanity back on track for peace and sustainability!

The good news is; 50 years after Stockholm, 30 years after Rio, 7 years after Paris and 6 years after Quito, humanity has built a significant level of knowledge, experience and capacity to overcome these challenges.

And more importantly, through the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as through the responses to the climate, biodiversity and humanitarian challenges, we have demonstrated how the Urban World can seize and rely on the power of interconnected, coordinated and capacitated local and regional governments as key actors and leaders.

Throughout 2022, we will collectively engage in Africa and in China in 3 international Conferences of the Parties dedicated to global climate, biodiversity and desertification. We will need to present our concept for a new model of engagement with the United Nations in New York and we will meet at the world congresses of our leading networks in Malmö, Daejon and Buenos Aires, amongst others.

Meanwhile, we are firmly advancing on our subnational engagements in the G7 and G20 processes and to make also these processes available platforms for national-subnational debate and action.

I am confident that all these milestones and momenta shall reinforce our collective efforts and will firmly cement the notion of multilevel action and inclusive multilateralism in Our Common Agenda. Inclusive and multilevel collaboration, enhanced with even more empowered local and regional governments, is the way forward to guarantee a sustainable life for our current and future generations within planetary boundaries.

ICLEI has been a pioneering member of the Global Task Force since its inception.

As ICLEI's Secretary General, I can confirm that the ICLEI leadership, our members and our staff are fully committed to actively support, engage and lead on these efforts with all partners of the Global Task Force, and in particular UCLG.

