

Local and Regional Governments united against Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought: Declaration and Call for Engagement

Acknowledging that:

- **Local and regional governments (LRGs) are critical actors** in addressing desertification, land degradation, and drought (DLDD) due to their unique proximity to local communities and guardianship of local resources, as well as their understanding of local realities and their capacity to contribute to the design, to implement impactful, communities and context-specific solutions.
- **The UNCCD process increasingly acknowledges their role as key actors in combating DLDD, furthermore, the LRGs Constituency have a recognized mechanism before the United Nations system which is the Global Task Force** and in particular for other Rio Conventions –e.g., the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities Constituency (LGMA) in UNFCCC and GTF through the Local and Subnational Government Summits in CBD– which demonstrate the importance of dedicated spaces and contributions for LRGs in global processes.
- **The UNCCD COP16 Mayors’ Forum, held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia on 06 December 2024, aimed at exploring the ways and means of empowering** local and regional governments and fostering a whole-of-governance and whole-of-society collaboration to address the pressing challenges of drought, climate change, and land degradation.
- **Emphasized** the need for local governments and their communities to be equipped with the necessary knowledge, tools, and resources through targeted awareness programs. Alongside the establishment of local drought task forces engaging other non-state actors.
- **Highlighted** the necessity of alignment of local actions with global frameworks, through multilevel coordination and multi-stakeholders approach, by advocating for stronger integration of local perspectives and contributions into national policies and global processes, and by proposing reforms that reflect on-the-ground realities, and building on previous achievements of local and regional governments constituency through Mayors Forums at UNCCD COP1 and COP2, but especially intensified since UNCCD COP13, in particular with the Local Governments Day at COP14, including recognition at the Delhi Declaration, as well as Decision 22 adopted at **COP15**.
- **Stated** financial mobilization as a critical component, channeled through local and regional governments to focus on investments in drought-resilient and flood-resilient infrastructure, territorial food systems, and community-based adaptive projects, with mechanisms to ensure transparency in loss and damage fund allocations related to Desertification, land degradation and drought processes.



- **Generated a transboundary approach** through local and regional territories that opens a pathway to unite local efforts in combating Land Degradation and Drought recognizing the interconnectedness of biomes, landscapes and watercourses

Commitments

We, the undersigned Mayors and Governors, and other authorities in Local and Regional Governments, representing cities and communities across the globe, have convened in Riyadh on the occasion of the 16th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD COP16)

Reaffirming our commitment to the principles of sustainable development and the goals set forth in global frameworks, including the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement, the Global Biodiversity Framework, and Land Degradation Neutrality targets under the UNCCD, and the Sharm Adaptation Agenda, we pledge to advance a unified vision to empower local and municipal authorities and their communities as transformative actors to effectively address interlinked sustainability challenges towards Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought

Recognize that:

- the escalating impacts of the triple risks of climate change, biodiversity loss, and land degradation on our communities, economies, and ecosystems, water resources, require local leadership to contribute to and complement global and national actions.
- the integration of Land-Based & Nature-Based Solutions, as well as a new relationship between Nature and Urban components into local governance is needed to enhance resilience through actions such as urban-rural development, wetland restoration, aquifer recharge, landscape planning, zoning and land market regulation, reforestation and sustainable watershed management while sharing best practices across regions
- DLDD is intrinsically linked to rural-urban linkages (URL), food security, water management and security, migration, and climate resilience, requiring a holistic and integrated approach to achieve sustainable outcomes.
- Urbanization and the unbridled consumption of natural resources are major drivers of DLDD, exacerbating vulnerabilities in both rural and urban areas, while cities remain the main destinations for climate migration and hubs for economic activity as well as frontline responders to the impact of climate change.

We hereby Call on Local and Regional Governments and UNCCD for a Structural Engagement:

calling UNCCD Secretariat and Parties to engage systemically and structurally with the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments in the pursuit of solutions to drought and land degradation. And a call for other cities and mayors globally to join the coalition, amplifying the reach and impact of this initiative. This includes:



1. **Fostering Regional Collaboration** for Shared Challenges by promoting regional networks to coordinate efforts and share best practices and develop cross-border initiatives addressing land degradation and water security
2. **Facilitating cross-cutting thematic collaboration** acknowledging that cities are the canvas where the sectors integrate in people's lives, thus partnerships between LRG to create integrated land management solutions encompassing all sectors are crucial.
3. **Promoting education and awareness** by developing and implementing public awareness campaigns about DLDD and its consequences. Providing targeted training programs for policymakers and practitioners on innovative DLDD governance solutions. Engaging schools and local communities in educational initiatives to build grassroots support for combating DLDD.
4. **Fostering collaboration and decentralized cooperation between LRGs, national governments, and international organizations** to implement comprehensive and inclusive solutions that are **policy-driven and under long-term frameworks**
5. **Delivering a structural mechanism for the self-organized constituency** of local and regional governments to UNCCD in between COPs and at COPs through the components of the Riyadh Process, legacy of COP16 on Desertification, Land Degradation and Drought building on the experiences of constituency-based engagement at other Rio Conventions (UNFCCC-climate, CBD biodiversity) as well as High Level Political Forum, UN Environment Assembly and UN Habitat Assembly.

Defining and launching the Riyadh Process:

The joint roadmap between Local and Regional Governments Constituency and UNCCD, together with key stakeholders, members of this process, is structured around:

1. policy-oriented contribution and enhancement of multilateralism: building critical contributions from LRGs and their partners to be brought to the UNCCD negotiations
2. supportive of local action, based innovative responses to local realities
3. empowering local and regional governments to take action
4. enabling impactful partnerships
5. Producing evidence-based information and locally sourced knowledge

Declaration

By signing this declaration, we affirm our commitment to actively contribute to the global Combat against Desertification, Land Degradation, and Drought, through the Riyadh Process and its partnership. We call on the international community, including the Parties to the UNCCD and the other Rio conventions, to provide the necessary platforms, resources, and partnerships to enable us to fulfill these commitments effectively. Together, we can build resilient communities and ensure a sustainable future for all.

Endorsed by all those presents

Julio Cesar Del Pozo Campos - District of San Mateo de Huancho Mayor
Mohamed Sefiani - City of Chefchaouen Mayor
Noraini Roslan - Selangor State Linked Company President of the Sustainability Committee
Fatimetou Abdel Malick - Region of Nouakchott President
Edouard Hervé Moby - City of Douala Mayor
Mohamed Saadie - Dannieh Municipality, Lebanon Mayor
Carlos Reyes Roque - City of Ica Provincial Mayor
Uğur İbrahim Altay – City of Konya Mayor
Martin Ebene - City of Puerto Madryn Vice-Mayor
Mohamed Basheer - Noonu Atoll Council President of the Council
Pablo Bereciartua - City of Buenos Aires Infrastructure Minister
Ramappa Krishnappa Badiger - Hubli Dharwad Municipal Corporation Mayor
Jamal Alwaked-Ein - Ein Al basha Municipality Mayor
Amgalanbaatar Amartuvshin - City of Ulaanbaatar Vice-Mayor
Gappar Sansebaev - City of Turkistan Chairman of the City Council
Daniyar Ayupov - City of Turkistan Deputy
Zinnur Büyükgöz - Gebze Municipality Mayor
Ahmet Pekyatırmacı - Selçuklu Municipality Mayor
Fırat Rutkay - Selçuklu Municipality Staff
Laure Baflan Donwahi - UVICOCI Vice-President
Cedrick Diarra - UVICOCI Secretary General

Signed by

The Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments

United Cities and Local Governments

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