



Address by the President of the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA), Cllr Mpho Parks Tau, at the Opening Session of the Metropolis Annual Meeting, Sandton

27 August 2018

Programme director,
Deputy Minister for Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, HE Andries Nel
Co-President of Metropolis and Gauteng Premier, Mr David Makhura,
Acting President of Metropolis, Mayor Michael Müller,
Tshwane Mayor Solly Msimanga
MECs, Mayors and Presidents of metropolitan regions,
Members of the media, and
Ladies and gentlemen:

I am pleased to address this Metropolis Meeting in my capacity as President of the United Cities and Local Governments, which represents more than 240 000 member-towns, cities, regions and metropolises from across the world.

It is my pleasure to welcome all of you to our city - Johannesburg in the Gauteng province of South Africa - on the African continent.

The role of metropolises in a changing world

Dear friends,

It is known to us all that by 2050, 68% of the world population will reside in cities. This is bound to bring great changes to the way we have organised ourselves as societies. By 2030, there are expected to be over 40 cities with over 10-million people living in them, and we will need to anticipate these changes and rise up to new challenges.

It is incumbent upon all of us gathered here, to mobilise our various constituencies and relevant stakeholders to ensure that we learn from each other. With this mobilisation and marshalling of our collective energies and resources is required that we ensure that we create strong democratic and inclusive metropolitan governance systems.

If we do not ensure we create a true system of local governments where all, big and small, can play a role then we would be compromising the survival and sustainability of

our cities and regions and our cities will not be places of opportunities but hostile spaces where the worst inequalities are fostered.

We cannot and should not let that happen.

I am well aware of the efforts that metropolises all over the world are making towards transformation, towards sustainable societies. There is a driving force in metropolitan areas and regions that we will need if we want to bring change about. It is for this force and innovation that we rely on you, our Metropolitan Section to bring to us the experiences, the knowhow and of course, the political leadership.

Solidarity between cities and regions, key to achieve the sustainable development goals

The most pressing issues that communities face, issues such as decent housing, mobility, energy and water access, education, decent work can no longer be looked at within the traditional urban boundaries.

This is why we need to address multilevel governance and renewal, because by addressing the future in cities we will be addressing the future of humanity. The urban landscape will shape the lives of communities whether they live in cities or not, and while we need the drive of metropolises, our urban future requires a new concept of metropolitan governance that includes smaller cities and links with rural areas.

Only through an integrated territorial approach will we be able to improve the lives of both urban and rural dwellers and achieve the ambitious goals that are common to all of us.

A unified voice in the international system

One thing that became clear with the presence of local and regional governments at the High-Level Political Forum this past July is that achieving the Global Goals will only be possible if we seize the opportunities of urbanisation and bringing decision-making to the closest levels to the citizens.

This is why we, as a global family of local and regional governments, are bringing our voices to the UN at the same time as we try to enhance our knowledge, accountability and efficiency to our communities.

This is what we describe as localisation of the global agendas and what UCLG is actively contributing to with our Local4Action agenda. The UCLG Local4Action Hubs will be the places where our membership gathered at different levels will create interdisciplinary relations and try to promote policy innovation that can influence global processes from local knowledge.

The active participation of stakeholders during the last international policy-making processes such as Agenda 2030, Habitat III, and the Paris Agreement and the unprecedented participation of local governments through the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments which UCLG is privileged to facilitate, are testimony to the great potential that we can tap into by being part and parcel of the international community.

We are convinced that it is now high time to enhance the quality of the involvement and the activities that emanate from the ongoing partnership with the UN. As we stated in the High-Level Panel that I chaired:

“Partnerships predicated on a mission of genuine inclusion, not just the delivery of participation as a project deliverable, imply a seat at the table for stakeholders who might not historically have occupied that position”.

It is in this spirit that we support the vision of the UN Secretary-General, that if the Global Agendas are to be achieved, the “UN development system will need to respond to national demands” for “inclusive alliances and participatory processes that take account of the needs of the most vulnerable and excluded”, as we are convinced that the constituencies of local and regional governments need to bring to the table and take into account the voice of the most vulnerable and excluded.

As the levels of government most engaged with addressing exclusion on the ground, local and regional governments must be high on the list of priorities of the UN and international institutions. This is why one of my main efforts as President of UCLG, with your support, is ensuring that our constituency is at the core of the decisions that will end up shaping the future of humanity.

Dear friends,

Let me be clear: we would not be here today if it was not for the strength that we have shown together as a constituency and our willingness to unite around the Global Taskforce, but also and most importantly, our capacity to unite in our century-old system.

Allow me to take a moment to commend the Metropolis leadership for the significant efforts being made to ensure strong synergies between our organisations, and for their significant contributions to our global movement.

I am convinced that this is only the beginning, that we will be able to ensure greater synergies and amplify our voices even more with our Local4Action agenda.

Let this meeting in Gauteng mark this renewed era of collaboration.

Thank you.

