



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

25 March 2019

Excellency,

I have the honour to circulate the summary of the Event convened, on 19 February 2019, in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat) on the theme: “From Global Issues to Local Priorities: The role of Cities in the Global Agenda, including Cities for Sustainable Development, Food Security, Nutrition and Climate Change”.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "M. ESPINOSA".

Maria Fernanda Espinosa Garcés

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

**From Global Issues to Local Priorities: the role of Cities in the Global Agenda, including
Cities for sustainable development, food security, nutrition and climate change**

19 February 2019, Trusteeship Council, United Nations Headquarters, New York

Organizers: President of the General Assembly, FAO and UN-Habitat

KEY MESSAGES AND SUMMARY

On 19 February 2019, H.E. María Fernanda Espinosa Garcés, President of the 73rd Session of the General Assembly in collaboration with the Food and Agriculture Organization of United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Human Settlement Programme (UN-Habitat) convened the event “From Global Issues to Local Priorities: The Role of Cities in the Global Agenda, Including Cities for Sustainable Development, Food Security, Nutrition and Climate Change”. The meeting included an opening segment as well as two panels followed by interactive dialogues (the event’s agenda can be found [here](#)).

The **first panel** on “Multilateral support to local action for sustainability” included the Mayor of Quito, Mr. Mauricio Esteban Rodas Espinel, the President of the Municipal Chamber of Praia, Mr. Óscar Santos, the Commissioner for International Affairs of New York City, Ms. Penny Abeywardena, and the Secretary-General of the United Cities and Local Governments, Ms. Emilia Saiz, and was moderated by the Coordinator of the UN-Habitat Urban Planning and Design Branch, Ms. Shipra Narang Suri.

The **second panel** on “Sustainable food systems and Cities” included the Mayor of Surabaya, Ms. Tri Rismaharini, the Mayor of Valencia, Mr. Joan Ribó, the Governor of Nairobi, Mr. Mike Sonko, and the Professor of Urban Research and Education of the University of Pennsylvania, Eugenie Birch, and was moderated by the Director of the FAO Office for Corporate Communications, Mr. Enrique Yeves.

Panellists shared experiences of effective local priorities, innovative strategies and lessons learned in addressing global challenges, including climate change, food insecurity and improved nutrition.

The main messages and summary of the interventions at the event are as follows:

Key messages

- **Multilateral efforts are needed to support the local implementation and monitoring** of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development Agenda, the New Urban Agenda and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, translating the global commitments in local actions with the full engagement of local authorities and actors.
- **A paradigm shift from competition to solidarity between cities and national governments, among cities and across the urban-rural continuum is necessary** to speed up achieving global agendas on sustainable and urban development and climate change. There is a need to **strengthen vertical integration across different levels of governments, from the local to sub-national to the national level.**
- **Local governments are key actors generating through their actions direct impact on the life of people.** Innovative financial architecture is essential to raise necessary resources to effectively localize the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
- **Role of non-state actors is central. The establishment of inclusive local governance mechanisms that enable multi-actor engagement** (i.e. Youth, urban communities, civil society organizations, private sector, academia, consumer associations and other stakeholders) **is crucial for implementing global agendas at local level**, creating space for dialogue, joint decision-making and stimulating innovative alliances.
- **The United Nations can play an important role to build capacities of cities**, especially towns and intermediate cities, to develop partnerships, including with civil society and the private sector, to implement the global agendas.
- Building on Habitat III, and the New Urban Agenda, and other international processes we must **amplify the voice of local authorities in global debate**, especially at the United Nations in debates on policy implementation related to sustainable development, food security, nutrition and climate change
- Fostering coordinated actions to strengthen urban-rural linkages and implement integrated territorial development are needed to ensure sustainable cities and thriving rural areas. The **“Urban-Rural Linkages Guiding Principles and Framework for Action to Advance Integrated Territorial Development”**, convened by UN-HABITAT in collaboration with other UN entities, national and sub-national partners and stakeholders provides valuable guidance on how to accomplish this.
- Cities and local governments play a key role in facilitating the access to nutritious food and promoting healthy diets is recognized as fundamental. This should be done through a food systems approach and integrated policies, planning and actions. The **FAO Framework for the Urban Food Agenda** indicates how FAO can support this process, **leveraging sub-national and local government action to ensure sustainable food systems and improved nutrition.**
- **The integration of sustainable food systems approaches in National Urban Policies and in urban and territorial planning** is a central element in linking different spatial scales. It allows the creation of synergies between activities that target food security and nutrition with other economic sectors and actors towards sustainable development.
- **The sharing of experiences, policies and information on fighting hunger and malnutrition among cities, including their territories of influence, is central.** It is important to support initiatives for research and exchange of good practices that focus on strengthening urban and territorial food systems. An example of this is the World Sustainable Urban Food Centre to be inaugurated in Valencia, which will provide a

valuable contribution to this knowledge exchange. Ultimately, it will serve as a positive influence on the global urban food governance through promotion of evidence-based local action.

Summary of the event

Opening

In her opening remarks, the President of the General Assembly noted that all cities share challenges that require multilateral solutions and that the relationship between climate change, food security and urban action is central to deliver on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. In this context, she called on local governments to go beyond SDG 11 when designing policies and urban planning initiatives. She also reiterated the commitment of the United Nations to listen to and work with local governments, building from the New Urban Agenda.

The FAO Director-General highlighted the role of cities in helping transform food systems to ensure healthy and nutritious diets for all, while preserving natural resources and biodiversity. He emphasized that public policies should support the shift to healthier and more nutritious diets and noted that the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition could contribute to this effort. He also stressed the need for territorial approaches to strengthen urban-rural linkages and recalled the adoption by cities of the 'Milan Urban Food Policy Pact'. In this context, he presented the FAO Framework for the Urban Food Agenda and welcomed the forthcoming inauguration of the World Sustainable Food Center in Valencia in a joint effort with FAO.

In a video message, the UN-Habitat Executive Director highlighted the role of cities in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, noting that sustainability, food production and nutrition are increasingly interlinked at the local level. She emphasized the need for vertical cooperation to achieve the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda and the Paris Agreement. She also affirmed that UN-Habitat was keen on working with governments and the UN system to promote food security in cities and presented the Urban-Rural Linkages Guiding Principles and Framework for Action that integrates food security, nutrition and food systems with other urban and rural planning and sustainable development priorities.

Panel 1 Multilateral support to local action for sustainability

The Mayor of Quito affirmed that the Sustainable Development Goals would not be reached without involving cities, adding that local governments should have the tools to contribute to the process. He stressed the need for a solidarity and cooperation-based vertical integration between national and local governments. The mayor also highlighted the value of international city networks to exchange ideas and share best practices, for example on urban and peri-urban food production to improve food security and nutrition.

The President of the Municipal Chamber of Praia indicated that because of massive rural migration, 99% of the population of Cape Verde lived in cities and explained how climate change impacts Small Island Developing States (SIDS). He said that access to quality food was a major challenge and that many people were suffering from obesity and cardiovascular diseases. He presented initiatives to address these challenges, such as investing in micro gardening and street food vendors and providing public spaces for exercise.

The New York City Commissioner for International Affairs reiterated the city's commitment to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. She informed that New York was the world's first city to present a Voluntary Local Review report to the High-Level Political Forum and encouraged other cities to do the same. The Commissioner also explained how the government used a gender-lens in its urban planning and how the food policy team works across relevant departments going beyond city borders.

The Secretary-General of UCLG emphasized the benefits of localizing the SDGs in territorial development. She noted the role the local governments can play in implementing the SDGs, highlighting the importance of bringing the UN and global policies closer to the people to show the difference that they can make. She emphasized that many of the Sustainable Development Goals resonate with citizens and they should be involved in the decision-making on how to implement them. She called for a change of paradigm in the relation of cities to rural areas, stressing that the rural does not exist only to feed cities.

Panel 2 Sustainable food systems and Cities

The Mayor of Surabaya discussed the experience of administering the second largest city in Indonesia, with a population of 2.7 million inhabitants, and shared best practices to combat climate change and malnutrition. She explained the city opted to promote food production with natural fertilizers, support food security and nutrition through healthy breakfast campaigns and provide free meals to approximately thirty-five thousand people, and invest in the planting of thousands of trees in the city to address the effects of climate change.

The Mayor of Valencia said cities were crucial in creatively responding to development challenges and, for this, networks of cities were important. In the context of sustainable food systems and food security and nutrition, he presented the World Sustainable Urban Food Centre, a joint initiative with FAO to facilitate the sharing of experiences, policies and information on fighting hunger and malnutrition in urban and peri-urban settings between cities. He added that urban food policies could help ensure affordable healthy food for all.

The Governor of Nairobi stated that SDG 2 was a top priority for sustainable development and affirmed the importance of ensuring the population had access to food at affordable prices, especially in poorer cities. The governor said that all African cities have the potential of producing food and enabling access to nutritious options and shared ways in which Nairobi was working on this matter, including by promoting a network of local markets; improving food storage and ensuring food safety.

Eugenie Birch, Professor of Urban Research and Education, University of Pennsylvania, noted the challenge that cities had to make food accessible to all, and that it was compounded by factors such as poverty, inequality, climate change and weak governance. She pointed out that many cities were addressing these challenges by investing in partnerships and integrating sectoral policies by using food systems approaches, rural-urban linkages and land-use planning.

In the interactive dialogues that followed the presentations, Member States and non-state actors echoed messages shared by panelists and highlighted the importance of partnerships and collective involvement in urban policies, integrating food in all levels of urban policy, overcoming the urban-rural divide, of empowering women, youth and civil society in general, of capacity building and the exchange of experiences, and of strengthening UN interagency collaboration to support sustainable development in cities.