**Draft declaration on behalf of Local and Regional Government Associations**

*To be discussed during the “ LGAs 2.0 – ready for the future’ session at the UCLG World Congress in Durban (Friday 12th of November, 09:00-10:30) and adopted within the UCLG statutory meetings in 2020*

We, CEOs and Presidents of Local and Regional Government Associations (LRGAs) from all around the world, represent numerous local and regional governments, of all sizes. We are convinced that union of and cooperation between local and regional governments remains crucial to be able to **multiply impact and scale up action towards pressing global challenges**, as also mentioned in the draft Durban Political Declaration of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). LGAs have the potential to play a pivotal role in dealing with the entire range of challenges – from the ecological transition to gender equality.

In the last century, LRGAs have been **engines for sustainable development**. The LRGAs which are members of United Cities and Local Governments commit to enhance their effectiveness, accountability and inclusiveness, thereby implementing the Agenda 2030. Although local governments have a special place in SDG 11 and SDG 16, we believe that all 17 Sustainable Development Goals link with local governments’ competences and see a crucial role for LRGAs to contribute to the successful realization of the SDG’s.

We realise that the context in which we operate **requires our organizations to continuously evolve**. Our responsibilities and roles are changing and so is the relation with our constituencies, as well as the relation with the central governments of our countries. However, our core tasks have remained similar throughout the years. LRGAs continue to stand ready to:

* **Engage in structural dialogue with national governments and the international community**

LRGAs represent the needs of their constituency and of their peoples, vis-à-vis the central government and relevant actors, including the international community. As umbrella organizations, we are in a stronger position than individual local governments to dialogue with the central government on pressing needs on the ground, such as a lack of basic service provision, or failing fiscal decentralisation. It is important to note that in many countries LRGAs are shifting from carrying out advocacy activities to structuralising inter-administrative cooperation.

Moreover, LRGAs continue to be important interlocutors and mediators between the international advocacy work and the local practice. Especially where the central government is weak or unresponsive, LRGAs often work with the international donor community to ensure that local governments are included in donor programmes. We also use our connections with the international community as leverage vis-à-vis the central governments. LGAs have several instruments at their disposal to act as drivers of change.

* **Facilitate learning, as networking organisations**

LRGAs facilitate continuous exchange and learning between their members and help to strengthen their capacity by doing so. Performance of local governments can be significantly strengthened by facilitating horizontal exchange between local governments or bringing different layers of local governments and other actors of civil society and the private sector within a region together to discuss issues that affect them.

As networking organisations, LRGAs can help build connections within their countries or abroad, aimed at capacity building. LRGAs are often involved in decentralized cooperation, which creates opportunities for groups of their members, for international learning and exchange.

* **Organizing services together**

LRGAs traditionally offer a variety of services to their members, from the adaptation of international agendas to the local context through modules, methods and templates, to structural dialogue with members on reinventing local democracy. These services lead to very concrete results, at local government level, which have an impact on the daily life of citizens.

In many countries, we are moving away from one-way service delivery to organizing services together with our members, in view of cost-efficiency and increased impact. Large cities often act as frontrunners, but it is also our responsibility to identify, **support, stimulate and expedite** good practices and innovation within and among small(er) cities and thus leave no local government behind.

We firmly believe that in executing these core tasks, Local and Regional Government Associations play a crucial role in all global challenges addressed in the Political Declaration – **right to housing, migration, renewing democracy and citizenship, intergenerational dialogue and peace, ecological transition, resilience, gender equality and culture** – and that we can be instrumental in addressing both the causes and the effects of these challenges.

It is needless to say that **LRGAs add important value to UCLG** through acting as a linking pin between the local practice of local governments and the abstract policy frameworks of national governments and international organizations. LRGAs are focal points for large constituencies of local governments which bring a strong and diverse group of local governments to UCLG. Moreover, LRGAs have the capacity to bring together different groups of local governments (with different approaches and characteristics) and finding an acceptable solution for all. This can and should be applied within all international organizations and agendas.

Through this declaration, we confirm our responsibility to continue to use this skillset to tackle local and global challenges and find pragmatic and useful solutions, leaving no one and no place behind.