

Sub-national Governments for Sustainable Development

Addressing Key
Challenges on the
Road to Rio+20
and Beyond

A contribution of the
UN Non-Governmental
Liaison Service (UN-NGLS)
to the nrg4SD General Assembly
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NGLS

The United Nations Non-Governmental Liaison Service (NGLS)
was created in 1975 by several agencies of the United Nations system
to serve as a bridge between the UN and civil society organizations.

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Introduction

This backgrounder is a contribution of the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service (UN-NGLS) to the nrg4SD General Assembly, 29-31 August in Québec City, Québec. It examines from a broad perspective the role that sub-national governments can and must play in changing development strategies worldwide to meet the multiple challenges facing the global community, namely:

- returning and remaining within the planetary boundaries of the Earth's capacity to re-generate its life-sustaining natural resources;
- reducing growing inequalities within and between countries;
- accelerating poverty reduction with the goal of its full eradication everywhere; and
- changing patterns of economic growth to achieve the above objectives, including through patterns of growth that are much more conducive to full and productive employment for all, especially for a fast-growing youth population.
- the reform of international institutions and methods of international cooperation to better support these aims.

In light of the disappointing experience of the last twenty years on all these fronts, it is essential to think and act “out of the box.” Individually and collectively, sub-national governments in consultation with their citizens, civil society constituencies and the private sector, have a decisive role to play to foster this development paradigm shift, especially in this unprecedented phase of globalization, which is in urgent need of rebalancing with an effective and inclusive “localization” strategy.

This backgrounder is divided into three parts, followed by an annex:

Part 1 provides a background on the seminal 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development (“Rio Conference”), its achievements in terms of setting a groundbreaking set of principles and agendas for action to place humanity on a more sustainable development path. It also highlights why the sustainable development promise was not fulfilled, including in terms of imbalances between “global” at the expense of the “local.”

Part 2 outlines the main features of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development agenda – or “Rio+20” – which is to take place in Rio in June 2012, especially the various institutional reform proposals that are on the table.

Part 3 highlights some of the key contributions of sub-national governments in implementing the sustainable development agenda, and points to some roles sub-national governments and their networks could play in a post-Rio+20 context.

The Annex provides some insights into how various organizations representing sub-national government entities may be in a position to participate actively in the Rio+20 Conference preparatory process and the Conference itself, as well as some pointers to strengthen more permanently the institutional presence of sub-national government entities at the United Nations.

The 1992 Rio Conference: Its achievements at the time and where are we today?

In 2012, UN Member States will conduct a 20-year review of the UN Conference on Environment and Development. When UN Member States in 1992 signed the Conference's outcome agreements, including Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration, they achieved a breakthrough in multilateral consensus. Raising the bar for political commitment, they established the concept of sustainable development as comprising three pillars – social, economic and environmental – which must be dealt with together. All signatories agreed they had common but differentiated responsibilities to implement steps to achieve sustainable development, meaning they must all work towards that end, but those with greater resources and capacities are obligated to do more.

Over the last 20 years, however, the ideals and principles of Rio have been overshadowed, as implementation has mostly not occurred. Similarly, a host of commitments to international human rights and development has not been fulfilled. Some economies have grown at double-digit rates, yet with widening disparities. Globalization has yielded millions of poor quality jobs, many filled by women. Little has been done to change patterns of production and consumption that pollute, erode biodiversity and lead inexorably to climate change. Smaller middle-income and the least developed countries have found space for making domestic policy choices to achieve sustainable development squeezed by external demands, such as to slash tax rates and spending on social services.

The Rio Conference, like other multilateral forums, underscored why the multilateral system should be the focal point for systematically agreeing on, mediating and acting on issues of global concern. Rio+20 should also provide the opportunity to constituencies beyond those focused on environment to participate, as well as providing space for representatives of organizations working on economic and social issues.

Main achievements of Rio '92

The 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, otherwise known as UNCED or the Rio Conference, had several outcomes. Besides Agenda 21, signed by 178 UN Member States, and the Rio Declaration, which outlined guiding principles, the Conference adopted a Statement of Principles for the Sustainable Management of Forests and launched three conventions on climate change, biodiversity and desertification. All three conventions have since come into force.

The Rio Declaration endorsed a number of principles that have become central to international environmental law, but that could be more broadly applied to sustainable development and human rights. They include:

Common but differentiated responsibility: In view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, States have common but differentiated responsibilities. The developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development in view of the pressures their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they command.

Public participation: Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information... that is held by public authorities...and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available.

Precautionary principle: In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.

Unsustainable consumption and production: To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, States should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies.

Polluter pays: The polluter should, in principle, bear the cost of pollution, with due regard to the public interest and without distorting international trade and investment.

Parallel to the official Conference, hundreds of NGOs organized a Global Forum that exercised considerable pressure in the deliberations at the Conference. An estimated 15,000 NGO representatives participated and an UNCED press release at the time suggested: "It will to a large extent be the NGO community which has so forcefully and fruitfully participated in this UNCED preparatory work, that will ensure that the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development will be the beginning of a process rather than an end in itself." The Forum also marked a milestone of civil society engagement in UN processes and paved the way for a strengthened role of civil society in the work of the UN. Wangari Maathai, an NGO delegate addressing the plenary on 14 June 1992, said: "The important, indeed vital, role which NGOs and social movements have to play in international negotiations has been broadened through the UNCED process. UN procedures will never be the same again." In fact, the strong civil society presence in Rio stimulated the discussion that led to the adoption of ECOSOC Resolution 1996/31, which acknowledged "the breadth of non-governmental organizations' expertise and the capacity of non-governmental organizations to support the work of the United Nations." The resolution broadened the scope of eligibility to obtain consultative status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to regional and national/sub-national organizations.

The reality 20 years later

Studies abound on the alarming state of global sustainability twenty years later, whether in terms of unsustainable depletion of natural resources, climate change-related catastrophes and increasing displacement of populations, growing inequalities, persistent mass poverty and unemployment/underemployment, expressed notably in terms of growing social unrest, especially among youth, and the rise in conflicts linked to environmental resource depletion.

A growing number of voices analyze these problems through the three-pillar sustainable development lens in the following terms: the economic pillar (understood in terms of unqualified economic growth) has been implemented to the detriment of the social and environmental pillars. This is usually code-word for describing how the so-called "Washington Consensus" policies of liberalization, deregulation and privatization have supplanted the carefully balanced sustainable development agenda agreed at Rio '92.

However, other voices take this analysis a step further, arguing that it is not so much that the economic pillar has taken priority over the other two, but *the way the economic pillar has been implemented has not only been detrimental to the other two pillars, but also to the economic pillar itself*. This is manifest in the series of financial and economic crises of the last twenty and thirty years, culminating with the “Great Recession” triggered in 2008. This of course has negative spillovers on social goals, but is bad for enterprises that in the process undergo cascades of bankruptcies, and then restructurings at lower levels of employment. Indeed another deficiency of this “boom-bust” approach to economic policy has been a pattern of “jobless growth” (versus “employment-intensity of growth”) and fast rising inequalities that create a deficiency in aggregate demand compensated by unsustainable debt-driven consumption, which was – with widespread financial deregulation – the underlying structural cause of the 2007-08 global financial crisis¹.

Thus, the deeper analysis is not precisely that the pursuit of economic growth has been at the expense of the social and environmental pillars, but that little attention has been paid to the *quality* of that growth (in terms of its employment intensity, redistributive qualities, and sustainable resource use). Some economic activities to meet unmet needs (such as better care for the elderly and children, reforestation, biodiversity protection/regeneration) need to “grow” while economic activities that are socially and environmentally harmful must gradually “de-grow.” The net result might be lower aggregate growth, but one that is more inclusive, equitable, job-intensive and environmentally sustainable.

These are the challenges that need to be discussed more intensively to overcome the risks of a political deadlock around the “Green Economy” theme for Rio+20 (see Part 2 below).

Before turning to the Rio+20 agenda, it is important to highlight the geographical or territorial dimensions behind the poor state of global sustainability today, namely that the “global” has been pursued often at the expense of the “local.”

The tendency of the prevailing policy framework has been to favour “the global” – the global movement of goods and capital – at the expense of “the local:” policies aimed at nurturing and revitalizing local economies and societies, creating jobs where most people would like to stay if given a chance.

This was a core message of the 2004 World Commission on Social Dimension of Globalization. In presenting the Commission’s report to the United Nations Economic and Social Council in June 2004, ILO Director-General Juan Somavia emphasized: **“there can be no successful globalization without a successful localization.”** For example, when one refers to a “favorable investment climate” in international policy circles, the bias in favor of the global is so ingrained that it is usually understood as an enabling framework for foreign direct investment (FDI). Under the right conditions, foreign investments can bring important benefits such as know-how and technology transfer. However, these kinds of investments are not where the volume of work is being created. It is the myriad domestic small- and medium-sized enterprises, micro-enterprises, cooperatives and self-employment schemes that generate the bulk of employment worldwide. These must be supported and enabled to flourish, but may also require different enabling investment frameworks than those favoring foreign investors. In some cases, the two may even be at odds, for instance when particular foreign investments end up “crowding out” small domestic producers unable to compete at a given point in time.

¹ See “Decent Work and Fair Globalization: A Guide to Policy Dialogue.” UN-NGLS, 2010. Available at: www.un-ngls.org/spip.php?page=decentwork.

It is in understanding the need for such rebalancing that the role of sub-national governments becomes so evident. The problems with globalization are increasingly being couched in terms of shrinking “national policy space” and a growing need to experiment with alternative policies. However this is equally true in terms of the “policy space” needed for sub-national government entities to respond to their own specific territorial challenges with policies adapted to local conditions and needs.

Finding better means to empower sub-national entities to find innovative means to address these challenges is one of the most important dimensions in the quest for more sustainable development models in the 21st Century. Some pointers to this effect are mentioned in Part 3.

PART
2

RIO+20: Themes, objectives and some ideas on the table for institutional reform

The Green Economy

The Green Economy seeks to find synergies between the efforts towards the eradication of poverty and sustainable production and consumption patterns. Poverty reduction efforts require economic growth that is based on less intense fossil-fuel energy and that pollute less. However, the challenge remains as how to foster a “Green Economy” that focuses not only on the process of internalization of environmental costs, but also addresses the root causes of poverty, inequality, job-less growth and environment degradation.

Differences have arisen around establishing a formal definition of “Green Economy,” especially between Northern and Southern countries. Many developing countries are concerned with the impact that the adoption of the “Green Economy” may have in the approach to sustainable development that emerged from Rio in 1992, which explicitly stressed the linkages between economic, social and environmental dimensions of development. Of particular concern is the fear that developed countries and international institutions could attach new conditionalities and restrictions to the assistance that they provide to developing countries, thus reducing their policy space for attaining their social development goals. Other concerns relate to the impact on trade: could a mis-placed emphasis on green economy lead to so-called “green protectionism?”

As discussed in Part 3, the challenge for this Conference is to overcome these suspicions, which would involve much more serious discussion on how to ensure a “just transition” to a Green Economy at the international level, but also to tackle head-on the comprehensive transformational agenda implied in the quest for a new development paradigm. It might also tie in with a “post-MDG framework” that will have to have matured by the time the Millennium Development Goals are due in 2015. Some are suggesting that Rio+20 could introduce new “Sustainable Development Goals.”

Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development

There is broad agreement on the need for institutional reform in the context of sustainable development at all levels. Since Rio '92, numerous UN institutions, programmes and conventions have been mandated to promote varying aspects of the UN's sustainable development agenda yet there is no overall coordination mechanism in place monitoring impact, overlap or progress that has been made. In this regard, proposals have been made to incorporate different agreements and conventions into an overall inter-agency coordination mechanism that would promote greater synergy between these and provide assistance on implementation efforts. Furthermore, emerging challenges that cut across national boundaries and have global impact, together with existing constraints, especially in developing countries, have called to the fore the need for an urgent rethink of the current institutional framework for sustainable development. In fact, a clear indication of the perceived need for reform is the designation by UN Member States of "the institutional framework for sustainable development" as one of the two main themes of Rio+20. A number of ideas and proposals have been tabled for orienting the international environment governance system towards a model that would better address poverty eradication and development; such a model would also provide a system-wide strategy for operationalizing sustainable development and achievement of its key principles. Other proposals advocate for the establishment of an umbrella organization for sustainable development and environmental sustainability, streamlining current structures and arrangements or a combination of both approaches. However, consensus has not yet emerged on any particular option and many aspects of these discussions are still in a preliminary phase.

The complexity and scope of sustainable development, combined with the need for systemic coordination, has led to calls from many quarters for raising the level of the debate on sustainable development. One way to achieve this would be by transforming the Trusteeship Council into a Sustainable Development Council. However, a reform of this nature would require amendment of the Charter, which is seen by many Member States as an additional complication that would considerably delay the process of reform. A similar proposal that would not require amendment of the Charter is the creation of a Council at the General Assembly level, such as the Human Right Council. Such a Council could be mandated to deal with emerging issues and would monitor and review implementation.

Another option is to strengthen the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) . During the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002, the Johannesburg Plan of Action recognized the need for an enhanced role of the Commission for Sustainable Development that should include reviewing and monitoring progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and fostering coherence of implementation, initiatives and partnerships. More recently, different voices have proposed a number of alternatives that includes increasing the session from two weeks to four or five weeks, reviewing partnerships and their role in development or creating a high-level segment to provide space for emerging issues and challenges.

A number of proposals have been put forth to expand the United Nations Environment Programme's mandate to strengthen the information-sharing mechanisms of the programme and its capacity for tackling the gaps in the current international environment governance system. Others have proposed creating a World Environment Organization that would incorporate different conventions, mechanisms and programmes approved since the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, the Rio Summit in 1992 and WSSD in 2002.

The organization would follow a sub-committee structured around the themes of atmosphere, biodiversity, chemicals, freshwaters and oceans. If a World Environment Organization were to be created, a coordination mechanism would be needed that considers the work already being done by the various UN agencies, funds and programmes in different areas related to sustainable development.

The number and diversity of stakeholders who contribute regularly to sustainable development discussions has increased since the Earth Summit 20 years ago. For instance, the Major Groups of the Commission of Sustainable Development have been able to considerably strengthen the link between policy and implementation. The upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development provides a further opportunity for global mobilization of all actors, potentially within a new framework. Broadening this range of stakeholders – including sub-national governments – is necessary to build viable partnerships to achieve sustainable development and other objectives on the UN’s agenda.

**PART
3**

Key contributions of sub-national governments to sustainable development, now and in the future

The notion that the multilateral arena needs to extend beyond national governments gained ground at UNCED, where Agenda 21 emphasized that local governments and authorities make important contributions to sustainable development, including through the provision of public services and local environmental management. Since then, sub-national bodies such as municipal and regional (or provincial) governments have been involved in UNCED follow up, including by creating local or sub-national Agenda 21 action plans.

Sub-national and local governments are essential actors in building a sustainable infrastructure. They have the institutional resources to develop infrastructure systems that are socially inclusive, contribute to the objectives of poverty eradication and social development, are managed and operated in a sustainable way and receive the support of the population and at the same time are integrated in the national infrastructure system.

Changing consumption and production patterns requires the involvement of all levels of government. Sub-national authorities can contribute by implementing policies and programmes that increase eco-efficiency and capacity-building strategies for sustainable consumption and production. They are uniquely placed to improve social and environmental management systems, encourage dialogue between enterprises and the communities in which they operate and facilitate citizen engagement in the transition towards more sustainable lifestyles.

Sub-national authorities can complement and enhance the efforts of the United Nations and the international community in implementing strategic plans and guidelines for sustainable economic and social development that incorporate UN guidelines on sustainable and inclusive development. A successful sustainable development strategy seeks to enhance the participation of communities in the design, adaptation and implementation of guidelines for sustainable development to local realities.

At the local level, where political configurations and the design of services can correspond more immediately to local demand, there can be room for innovation and greater ownership. Environmental stewardship is frequently a local pursuit because many threats to the environment are most readily felt close to home. In a number of countries, the process of decentralizing public services from central to local governments has given municipalities a far greater role in guiding local development – but often not with the commensurate resources needed to meet these added responsibilities.

Looking ahead to Rio+20, there are a number of emerging issues and challenges that have been raised by Member States and other stakeholders that will most likely be discussed and debated, including water and sanitation, waste management, sustainable transport systems, protection of biodiversity or the promotion of sustainable lifestyles. Dealing with these issues will require better coherence and coordination between international, national, regional and local levels. Sub-national governments are uniquely placed as key actors who can mobilize broad support at the local and regional levels for implementing a sustainable development agenda and who can also help the United Nations in adapting policies and guidelines to better address these emerging challenges.

A prime example that illustrates synergies between the multilateral system and the different levels of governments on dealing with emerging issues is the Plan of Action on Sub-national Governments, Cities, and Other Local Authorities for Biodiversity². The plan calls for stronger engagement with sub-national and local authorities in the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity, and also seeks deeper engagement between sub-national levels of governments and the work of the Convention at the global policy level.

Thinking ahead: strategic areas for sub-national governments networks to position themselves in the post-Rio+20 context

Building strong partnerships with key civil society actors and UN entities around strategic themes and issues in which sub-national governments have a strong “comparative advantage” is essential in the quest for new more sustainable development paths for the 21st Century.

One such strategic area is *integrated rural employment strategies*. This would consist of two main components:

- Major reinvestments in small-scale agriculture and rural non-agricultural enterprise development (including skills and technological upgrades) to simultaneously raise farm incomes, generate demand for locally/regionally produced non-agricultural goods and services and create a virtuous cycle of poverty reduction.
- Major additional investments in public employment schemes to (re)build rural infrastructures (including small-scale irrigation schemes), agro-forestry and other social and environmentally-useful activities, which could amount to a fresh pool of “green jobs” creation, especially for rural youth.

² See, for example, www.cbd.int/authorities.

These types of integrated territorial development strategies (above the municipal level to gain optimal economies of scale and networks of actors, but below the national level) are increasing being discussed within the UN and civil society. It is evident that such strategies require sub-national governments as the key coordinating actors.

Making sure that these territorial strategies are developed, implemented and evaluated with the full participation of the actors and affected communities is essential and requires institutional investments. But how such kinds of investments can be adequately and sustainably financed is the perennial challenge.

Examples of “top-down” approaches, even in the context of wealth economies such as the large-scale investments of the European Union to the sub-national territories of the poorer countries of the Union have shown their limits, including capital flight from these poorer territories. This points to the need to “think out of the box” in terms of more “endogenous” means of financing and sustaining integrated territorial development strategies.

To address these challenges, that are pertinent to rich and poor countries alike, a global platform for sharing best practices among networks of sub-national governments, UN entities and civil society groups and networks could make a decisive difference, irrespective of the decisions taken in Rio next year.

ANNEX

How can networks of sub-national governments “get a foot in the door” on the road to Rio+20 and beyond?

During PrepCom II, held from 7-8 March 2011, UN Member States discussed objectives and expectations for the Conference, with a continued focus on its two main themes. PrepCom II also saw discussion on the content and format of the Rio+20 outcome document, with the Committee adopting a draft decision requesting that a zero-draft outcome document be circulated no later than early January 2012. Member States, UN bodies and other relevant stakeholders are invited to provide contributions before 1 November 2011 to the UNCSD Bureau³. Contributions would serve as a basis for a compilation text with inputs and comments from Member States, the UN System and other stakeholders that will be presented during the Second Intersessional meeting in December 2011 to seek further comments and guidance. The zero-draft Outcome Document of the Conference will be presented in a three-day meeting in January followed by one full week of negotiations in February, March and April 2012. A third Prep-Com will take place just before the Conference in Rio de Janeiro from 28 to 30 May 2012.

³ See: www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.php?page=view&type=12&nr=238&menu=32.

Most likely organizations that either hold consultative status to ECOSOC or are on the CSD Roster will be entitled to participate in the Conference in accordance with the modalities on civil society participation to be approved by Member States. However, as in the Earth Summit in 1992, Member States may decide to open an accreditation process that would allow civil society organizations without accreditation to the aforementioned bodies to participate at the Conference.

Consultative status with ECOSOC: Resolution 1996/31

The main and more formalized venue that civil society organizations have to interact with the United Nations is consultative status to ECOSOC. The changes outlined by Resolution 1996/31 defined three categories of status for NGOs: general consultative status, special consultative status and listing on the Roster. The Committee on NGOs, composed of 19 UN Member States who are elected for a two-year term, decides on granting of a certain status to NGOs. It meets twice a year to examine admission requests for consultative status made by NGOs and makes recommendations on which organizations should be granted one of the three categories. The NGO section of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs serves as the secretariat for the Committee.

NGOs in consultative status receive the provisional Agenda of meetings of ECOSOC and those with general consultative status can request the insertion of items in the Agenda of the meeting and the Agenda of its subsidiary bodies. Organizations with general consultative status and special consultative status and those on the Roster have the right to designate representatives that can attend open meetings of the Council and its subsidiary organs. Organizations with general and special consultative status and those on the Roster can be invited to UN conferences.

NGOs with general consultative status and special consultative status have the right to present brief written statements that can be distributed among participants in the meeting in the same way as official documents of the United Nations during open sessions of the Council and its subsidiary bodies. They might also be invited to present written statements and those in general or special consultative status have the right to take the floor and make oral statements during specific sessions of the Council and its subsidiary bodies.

Although ECOSOC represents the most formalized venue that civil society has to engage with at the United Nations, it takes at least one year from the moment that the organization presents all the documentation until the Committee considers the request for consultative status to the Council. The Secretary-General has the capacity to include non-governmental organizations that can make “occasional and useful contributions to the work of the Council or its subsidiary bodies” in the Roster.

Further enhancing stakeholder engagement with ECOSOC

The United Nations’ sustainable development agenda requires enhancing the level of participation of all stakeholders, including advising the Economic and Social Council in its deliberations and assisting, as appropriate, in implementation. Sub-national governments are strategically

placed to create enabling environments in which the three pillars of sustainable development are fully embraced. Networks of regions could help the United Nations in implementing policies that embrace the three pillars in a balanced way and by adapting UN guidelines and policy recommendations to specific regional and local situations. Networks of regions could create innovative partnerships and methods of work and strengthen linkages between the work of the Economic and Social Council and the regional and local dimensions.

A forum at the level of ECOSOC to review implementation would also provide an opportunity to sub-national authorities to formalize a space that could serve as a platform to exchange ideas and opinions and enhance multilevel efforts towards sustainable development. The changes that have occurred in the structure of development cooperation since Rio '92 – and the increasing complexity of the challenges posed by sustainable development at all levels – require the participation of all stakeholders and the creation of institutional spaces that allow these stakeholders to share their views and perspectives on the challenges ahead. Such a forum would give sub-national authorities the opportunity to contribute in a constructive way to the UN's agenda on sustainable development.

Engaging with the UN General Assembly

The UN General Assembly also provides non-state entities with observer status. Among these are the International Committee of the Red Cross, which formerly held consultative status to ECOSOC and was granted observer status to the GA in virtue of its contribution to humanitarian work in 1990; the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies; the Inter-Parliamentary Union, which was granted observer status in 2002 after a long history of engagement in the work of the UN; the International Criminal Court; the International Olympic Committee; and the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, of Rhodes and of Malta in 1994. There is not a fixed procedure to gain observer status to the General Assembly and designation is made purely on practice. Usually, non-state entities are granted observer status to recognize their contribution to important elements on the UN's agenda on economic and sustainable development or humanitarian assistance. Although there is no formal representation of networks of local or regional authorities that have observer status in the Assembly, the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) have requested to be granted observer status.

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Recognising civil society as vital agents of social change, NGLS enables their meaningful and dynamic engagement at the United Nations to address challenges facing the global community

NGLS New York, Room DC1-1106, United Nations, New York NY 10017, USA,
telephone +1 212/963 3125, e-mail: npls@un.org

NGLS Geneva, Palais des Nations, CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland,
telephone +41 22/917 2076, e-mail: npls@unctad.org,

www.un-npls.org