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CPMR POLICY POSITION

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DECENTRALISED COOPERATION AND THE REGIONAL DIMENSION IN THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

On 25 September 2015 the United Nations (UN) General Assembly formally adopted the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, along with its set of **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** intended to be a universal, integrated, and transformative path for sustainable human development. The new framework builds on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and includes 17 SDGs and 169 associated targets aimed at the overarching goals of eliminating poverty, fighting inequality, and addressing climate change over the next 15 years. Among the 17 SDGs is **SDG 11 "Make Cities and Human Settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable"**, which enshrines the recognition by the international community that sustainable urban and territorial development can and must be a key driver for human development in the 21st century.

The adoption of the new framework and the SDGs concludes a three-year process initiated with the 2012 UN Rio+20 Conference on Sustainable Development and its outcome document, *The Future We Want*, and carried forward by the Open Working Group on the SDGs, through an inclusive process with unprecedented levels of engagement of non-member state stakeholders and civil society.

As the first-ever global agreement setting a universal, comprehensive agenda for sustainable human development, the 2030 Agenda mobilises national, regional and local authorities, and all other stakeholders of civil society towards their achievement. This new global framework for sustainable human development will have an **impact on European and domestic policies and budgets, and the subsequent partnerships for implementation, indicators and monitoring & review mechanisms** in many areas of seminal importance for territorial development - urban development, economic growth and jobs, resilient infrastructure, water and sanitation, energy, governance, access to justice and the rule of law, women's empowerment and gender equality, climate action, environmental sustainability, sustainable consumption and production, etc. The 2030 Agenda also includes the UN **Financing for Development Framework** adopted in Addis Ababa in July 2015, which sets out the different means necessary to implement the 2030 Agenda, including domestic resources, private finance and Official Development Assistance (ODA). The **future climate change framework** expected for adoption at the upcoming conference in Paris in December 2015 will be a crucial companion framework for the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. Last but not least, the urban and territorial development community is stepping up the preparations for the UN Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development **Habitat III** in October 2016, where the global *New Urban Agenda* will be adopted, and the implementation of SDG11, as well as the localisation of the 17 SDGs will be operationalized.

The new 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development will set the framework for all cooperation and development plans, funding schemes and partnerships at a global level. The Agenda offers an exceptional **opportunity for the international, regional and local authorities and communities to work together** with refreshed and also new approaches based on human rights, people-centred and conducive to multilevel governance and territorial development. **Decentralised cooperation** is a critical tool for **institutional building actions** and for encouraging solidarity, capacity building and peer-to-peer learning with a multilevel and territorial approach.

The potential for decentralised cooperation to help maximise the transformative nature of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda has been acknowledged by the European institutions and the United Nations, as well as by regional and local governments throughout its elaboration process. In parallel, the territorial dimension is emerging at the core of a new alliance for decentralised cooperation to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

Led by the Basque Country region over the past two years, the CPMR Working Group on External Cooperation has been working on the territorial dimension of the 2030 Development Agenda and the SDGs, as well as on the elements of a renewed approach to decentralised cooperation for increased impact and efficiency. The Working Group has carried out its activities in close collaboration with the European institutions, the United Nations, CONCORD, PLATFORMA and the Global Task Force for Local and Regional Governments, and on the basis of the Plan for Action validated by the Group.

Taking into account the outputs of the CPMR Working Group on External Cooperation led by the Basque Country over the past two years; the outcomes of the consultation process carried out by the Committee of the Regions; the communications by the European Commission and the European Parliament on the Post-2015 intergovernmental process and the recently adopted global **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, along with its set of **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs).

The *CPMR*:

1. *Warmly welcomes* the adoption of this global 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, its integrated approach for reconciling social, economic and environmental concerns and its recognition of urban and territorial development as key drivers for human development. Urges the international community to mobilize and sustain financial commitments and means of implementations commensurate with the transformative nature of this Agenda.
2. *Remains committed to* promoting the territorial dimension of this agenda and its adaptation to the regional level.
3. *Underscores that* the universality of the 2030 Agenda can and must be compatible with the principle of differentiation and the territorial approach to implementation.
4. *Believes that* the regional development model encouraged within the European Union offers extraordinary opportunities for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.
5. *Recalls that* over past decades, decentralized cooperation has been acknowledged as an important international partnership and institutional building driver, particularly encouraging for solidarity, capacity building and peer-to-peer learning with a territorial approach and with regional and local relevance. Case study research carried out by the CPMR via its External Cooperation Working Group, shows that European local and regional governments, and the new alliances they have crafted with their peers from third-countries, have become an integral part of global development policies and have developed critical expertise for implementing solutions to common problems that truly respond to the needs in their territories. Decentralised cooperation has tangibly helped build capacity in public agencies, as well as in elected representatives and officials.
6. *Also recalls that* European local and regional governments not only work among peers but also with other organisations in a given territory, involving civil society organisations and NGO partners at all stages of the process both at the donors' and the recipients' territories. This results in the increase of the local NGO tissue and in NGOs at both ends developing capacity on specific issues of relevance for territorial development. Equally important, are the positive impacts in terms of further empowered and engaged civil society. This is the multi-stakeholder approach empowered and

enabled by decentralised cooperation initiatives driven by regional and local authorities and it provides incomparable ownership and added value in terms of involvement of local actors; efficiency of results and long-term legacy of development cooperation aid.

The CPMR strongly believes that, if the objectives of the recently adopted global 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda and its 17 SDGs - including SDG 11 'To make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable' are to be achieved for balanced territorial development at all geographical scales across the EU and in win-win collaboration North-South and South-North, the following should be *sine qua non* elements for implementation, financing, monitoring and review:

7. **A new paradigm of North-South and South-North solidarity and accountability based on a culture of shared responsibility**, for which the role of the regional and local governments, the multi-level governance approach, the respect to the principle of subsidiarity, and synergetic planning and implementation among all levels of government are crucial;
8. **Capacity building and peer-to-peer learning** schemes for regional and local governments; including through technical assistance and the provision of adequate financial resources;
9. European and national schemes to guarantee that the **revenue and expenditure share of regional and local governments** is **commensurate with the tasks and services** they deliver, including for example:
 - Institutional environments to enable the mobilization of finance for and at the these levels;
 - Increased regional and local authority to generate additional revenues through taxation and other mechanisms;
 - Tailor-made regional and local funds and access to municipal development banks and/or pooled municipal financing;
 - Public guaranteed microcredits to facilitate funding for small scale infrastructure projects in areas such as economic regeneration, energy, gender empowerment, job creation, SMEs, etc.
 - Credit worthiness of local and regional governments to access external funding and to promote sound financial management;
 - Green banks and green bonds, and
 - Capacity building in regional and local governments for bankable infrastructure project development and land value capture.
10. Meaningful **multi-stakeholder and cross-disciplinary** approaches for implementation and their translation into specific **partnership structures**;
11. Revised terms of reference for achieving effective **private-public partnerships** with strong institutional governance mechanisms and accountability controls on the part of all levels of government;
12. **Indicators** that can be disaggregated at the territorial level and hence track progress not only at the national level, but also over space and time at the local and regional levels;
13. Effective **monitoring and reporting mechanisms** anchored in the principles of transparency, accountability and public access to information to inform management by various levels of government and other stakeholders. CPMR regions and European Institutions could collaborate to set up concrete pilot initiatives with the participation of regions and partners in developing countries.