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DES RÉGIONS
DE FRANCE



Assemblée des
DEPARTEMENTS
DE FRANCE



ASSOCIATION DES MAIRES DE FRANCE



Assemblée
des Communautés
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Maires
de grandes
villes



Fédération
des Maires
des Villes
Moyennes



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association des maires
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de France



AMRF
Association des Maires
Ruraux de France



Association Française du Conseil des Communes et Régions d'Europe



Assembly
of European
Regions

Declaration by French Local Authorities on Rio+20



RIO+20
United Nations
Conference on
Sustainable
Development

This declaration by Local Authorities¹ on Rio+20 was drafted during **the French National Assizes of Sustainable Development**, hosted by the Midi-Pyrenees Region in Toulouse in October 2011, where this text was thoroughly discussed and enriched.

Following these discussions, **the Association of French Regions, the Assembly of French Départements (Counties), the Association of French Mayors, the Assembly of French Communities, the Association of French Mayors of Major Cities, the Federation of Mayors of Medium-sized towns, the Association of Small French Towns, the Association of French Urban Communities, the Association of French Mayors of Cities and Suburbs, the Association of French Mayors of Rural Areas, the French Association of the Council of Communes and Regions of Europe and the Assembly of European Regions** and other Local Authority networks wishing to be associated, **jointly declare:**

“Public policies of Local Authorities affect all areas of life, housing, transport, employment, education and the well-being of citizens. It is therefore our responsibility to develop these fields to meet the legitimate aspirations of the population, and to do so taking the general interest of all into account by ensuring that the physical and biological capacity of our planet are respected. Our clear vision is built on our hands-on experience. We wish to assume full responsibility, and are motivated by the desire to co-operate with all the relevant stakeholders. These are the positions we wish to present to the World Summit in Rio-2012.

All States, organisations and agencies, and all levels of Public Authorities should consider us as partners in sustainable development, and especially as essential actors in the transitions that we need to successfully confront. Local knowledge of the area, local development know-how, the ability to innovate and experiment, and participatory implementation by Local Authorities that involves citizens are all important factors of success in the efficient building of public policies.

Rio+20 should provide us with the springboard for a transition process, and launch a cycle of negotiations for the 2012-2010 period. It should enable us to build democratic, transparent new forms of governance within the United Nations to help humanity meet the challenges it is now facing. This can only be achieved if civil society and Local Authority actors become truly involved in the process.”

1 – The key challenges of the Rio+20 conference

Since the 1992 Rio Summit, the world has undergone profound change. Humanity is now directly confronted by the finite limitations of our planetary resources. This confrontation makes it essential to change our civilisation through the collective, solidarity-based management of our planet. This is the indispensable condition to succeed in our struggle against climate change, the erosion of biodiversity, and unequal access to water, health, energy and natural resources. Global challenges, including meeting the Millennium Development Goals, are linked to the way the different levels of Local Authorities implement public actions. If we fail to do what is required, there will be increased human suffering, and there is a risk that the protests against inequality might degenerate into violence. We therefore need to move forward and progress towards a green economy that optimises our resources, allows a more equitable and sustainable sharing of wealth and development for all.

Globalisation that is founded only on the principles of economic competition and national interest leads to an increase in inequality, because there is an absence of regulatory mechanisms. The financial crisis has thus become a deep systemic crisis; the solution can

1. This term includes Regional, County and Municipal Local Authorities in France.

only be found through the combined economic, social, ecological and political responses in a framework of sustainable development.

This is why the key themes of the Rio conference in 2012 are the green economy and poverty eradication in the context of sustainable development and the improved governance of sustainable development. It is obvious that we can make considerable progress to reduce social inequalities, current wastefulness, and further improve individual and collective behaviour in our production and consumption patterns and move towards a more ecologically and fairer economic model.

2 - The role of Local Authorities

Setting the scene for a new period in the history of humankind that will be marked by the double movement to confront both the finite resources of our planet and the globalisation of the economy implies **ensuring the quadruple coherence between:**

- ▾ **Global governance** and regulation that will guarantee the right of all people to development and access to resources;
- ▾ **Proper implementation of those commitments made by States**, this is the first and most important responsibility of governments;
- ▾ **The increased role of Local Authorities** as these are the instances where policy can include the economic, social and ecological dimensions through a democratic process that involves citizens;
- ▾ **Renewed civic-mindedness** that will enable all civil society to build lives that combine those original and individual aspects that link an agreeable lifestyle to all aspects of general interest (including at global level) and social solidarity.

Even if the interdependence between humanity and the biosphere means that it is essential to start by determining global solutions, Local Authorities, irrespective of their size or the scope of their remit, play an essential role in finding the solutions, both through their own actions and their democratic ability to involve citizens. In a globalised economy, Local Authorities are the level at which the solidarity that is required for successful social cohesion is built through and by the way in which citizens' needs are met. **International Conventions can only be successfully implemented through the support of Local Authorities and inhabitants.**

Local Authorities' policies affect all areas of life (housing, work, transport, exchange, well-being, food, education, health...). **They therefore need to work with other levels of local and international government to develop these aspects to meet peoples' legitimate aspirations in a sustainable way that also respects the physical and biological capacity of our planet.**

Since the Rio Conference in 1992, Local Authorities have shown through their actions that they are able to implement sustainable development. Chapter 28 of the Action Programme for the 21st Century called for the massive implementation of local Agenda 21s as of the beginning of the 1990s. Although the first programmes may not have been implemented until then, the Agenda 21s have since enabled the development of a powerful dynamic, and have pushed Local Authorities to ask themselves new questions, seek suitably adapted solutions that are both coherent and shared. Local Agenda 21s are one of the key translations of the way that sustainable development has been integrated into the public policy-making process.

Sustainable development has become the backbone of coherent public policy-making. Nonetheless, Local Authorities have their own specific remits and means. Their efficiency also depends on the quality of their relationship with other levels of local, county and regional decision-making bodies. Although for historical reasons Agenda 21s were initially concerned with ecological and environmental issues, confronting social challenges, and those related to patterns of production and consumption are the challenges that have been taken up by new local and regional projects in the current context of serious crises.

The issue facing Local Authorities is increasingly one of their substantial increase in responsibility, particularly the preservation of resources and the environment, increased demands for the fairer sharing of wealth (income, ecological resources...) and the ability to move towards new methods of production and consumption. **Because Local Authorities are aware of their responsibilities, they intend to fully participate in developing and implementing policies based on sustainable development.**

However it is essential that the various levels – international, European, national, regional and other levels of local government all enact their respective responsibilities, if the overall objectives are to be met. It is therefore linked to:

- ▶ **The organisation and connection between the various levels of action:** the international community and States need to organise and work with Local Authorities to find the means to enable them all to cooperate;
- ▶ The position on **financial resources and tax** with a reinforced remit for Local Authorities.

The shift that is in the process of taking place in our civilisation will only succeed in overcoming the challenges and stalemates if we meet **the demands for social and environmental justice and increased democracy**. It is indeed this democratic progress that will enable us to gain control- of the profound change to our way of perceiving the world, irrespective of whether this relates to the economy, technology, lifestyles or mentality.

Local Authorities will make their contribution by increased involvement of local actors and various public authorities, companies, trade unions, NGOs and citizens in the policy-making process. Doing this successfully means that all the stakeholders need to agree to the process, and to make an active contribution. The fact that citizens nowadays have a higher level of education and training, coupled with new methods of communication means that they can play a far greater part in preparing and evaluating public decisions, as well as providing new and additional democratic input. **The high level of the stakes means that public decision-making needs to be based on the broadest possible participation.**

Local Authorities, in the prolongation of the Declaration by Local Authorities at the Johannesburg Summit **again state their will and commitment to and support of:**

- ▶ The Action Plan 21, to the Rio+20 Declaration in accordance with the principles of solidarity, general interest, cross-cutting approach and participation;
- ▶ Respect the 1998 Aarhus Convention to develop and encourage public participation in decision-making processes and access to environmental justice;
- ▶ The Aalborg Charter (1994 & 2004) to integrate sustainable principles in local urban policy-making;
- ▶ Support of the declarations adopted prior to the climate change conferences (Copenhagen, Cancun);

- ▶ Implement the commitments of the Declaration of Dunkirk (2010) on the transition to sustainable towns;
- ▶ The European Convention of Mayors for sustainable local energy (2008);
- ▶ The determination to protect the environment as expressed in the Charter of the Mayors of France (2007).

3 – Actions from global to local level

The successful implementation of all the above-stated objectives demands progression at all levels of governance. This is why Local Authorities call upon...

The international community to implement measures that will:

- ▶ **Eradicate poverty, reduce social inequalities and fight against discrimination**, at a time when we witness society's inability to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), with a huge increase in inequalities, and one billion people who are still suffering from hunger. At Rio we need to decide on additional Sustainable Development Goals aimed specifically at access to energy and food self-sufficiency for all countries.
- ▶ **Manage energy and other natural resources** with moderation, so that we guarantee the stability and cost of raw materials and food, maintain and develop local agriculture.
- ▶ **Guarantee ecological balance** – stabilise climate change to a level that guarantees access to water, sanitation and food, and avoids ecological disasters as well as the protection of biodiversity at all levels and in accordance with the principle of shared but differentiated responsibility.
- ▶ **Build a system of social protection that supports all people**, at the very time when the globalisation of economy translates into pitting workers of different countries against one another in competition, and social protection systems, if they even exist, are under stress, through the pressures that are being brought to bear by economic demands/constraints.

To achieve this, we need to:

- ▶ **Institute global regulatory mechanisms** in the fields of finance, currency, trade and taxation, to provide an answer to the economic and financial instability that is causing social and ecological tragedies.
- ▶ **Enable Local Authorities to become stakeholders in designing programmes, policies and measures that will allow them to take their full responsibility** in implementing policies for sustainable development, including the fight against climate change and for the protection of biodiversity.
- ▶ **Provide groups of Local Authorities with the status of intergovernmental organisations** in the framework of the United Nations.
- ▶ **Create a Council for Sustainable Development that will coordinate** agencies and operational programmes within the United Nations.
- ▶ **Enable Local authorities to participate in the negotiations that respond to the financial crisis** – of which they are also victims – given that many components of the crisis, like speculation on common goods such as housing or food, public deficits that involve reforms that impact the tax system, and the ability to raise long-term funding.

▶ **Allow Local Authorities to gain access to funding from multilateral development banks**, to enable them to implement sustainable local development policies and co-operation between territories.

▶ **Strengthen the support for actions of decentralised co-operation and international solidarity** that are part of an approach to sustainable local development, Agenda 21, Climate Plans...

▶ **Adopt new indicators** that represent aspects that have hitherto not been evaluated by GDP, such as the quality of life or ecological and social sustainability. (Ecological Footprint, Human Development Index, Indicator of Social Well-Being...)

The European Institutions

▶ **Dedicate the financial means required to implement sustainable development strategies and facilitate access to these funds by Local Authorities** in the framework of European policies (Cohesion Policy, Common Agricultural Policy...)

▶ **Ensure the guaranteed independence of actions and organisation** of Local Authorities to implement high quality public services that are accessible to all.

The State

▶ **Continue to implement decentralisation** by applying the principle of subsidiarity, particularly in the struggle against climate change and energy policies.

▶ **Provide Local Authorities with the right to implement a legal framework to encourage experiments and innovation**, as they are the source of technological, organisational and behavioural innovations.

▶ **Involve Local Authorities in public policy-making**, given the decisive role they play in the success of their implementation.

▶ **Change tax laws** to allow Local Authorities some margin for manoeuvre and guarantee their indispensable need to budget their financial resources.

▶ **Enhance the idea of social investment** to allow public tenders to include sustainable practice.

4 – Local Authorities' commitments

Local Authorities hereby commit to:

- ▶ **Continue working to extend Rio-92** through the concept of sustainable development that links ecological sustainability to social justice and the promotion of local approaches to sustainable development such as Agenda 21.
- ▶ **Promote the transition to sustainable territories**, that are solidarity-based and fair, that guarantee locally-based economic development, that strengthens the resilience in accordance with sustainable management of local resources (natural resources, renewable energies...) and that is socially responsible (employment and innovation, green technologies...).
- ▶ **Support access to information and guarantee participation** of citizens in public affairs, in jointly developing and evaluating public policy.
- ▶ **Pursue the optimisation, the sharing and moderation of the use of resources.**
- ▶ **Work to ensure equal access to education and employment** for all members of society, and pay particular attention to gender balance, youth and people suffering from disabilities.
- ▶ **Promote access to life-long learning** for all people to help them through these times of considerable change.
- ▶ **Support a multicultural and solidarity-based vision of sustainable development** that takes the many different cultural approaches, individual and local know-hows into consideration, and that is based on respect of the general interest.
- ▶ **Facilitate fair access to essential local needs:** drinking water and sanitation, energy, health, public transport, housing, etc.
- ▶ **Use public tenders as a lever for sustainable development** by developing local food and energy supply chains, social and solidarity economy, and encouraging the relocalisation of activities...
- ▶ **Encourage a joined-up approach to sustainable development policies** at the different levels of Local Authorities through co-operation between different territories.
- ▶ **Contribute through decentralised co-operation** to strengthening the capacities of developing countries to progress towards sustainable solidarity-based development.
- ▶ **Implement a new generation of Agenda 21s and other local sustainable development projects** in the post-Rio + 20. These projects should optimise the progress that has already been made and respect the principles of general interest.



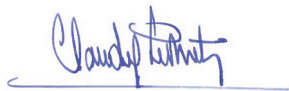
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Declaration signed, 28 October 2011, by:



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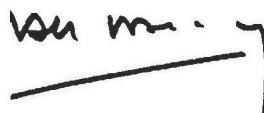
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