2023 Forum Final Outcomes: Local and Regional Authorities Recommendations

The quality of the exchanges in the plenary and break-out sessions led to **structured and coherent recommendations,** jointly and collaboratively developed amongst co-created working groups composed of Forum participants. The Forum was a unique opportunity to **consolidate insights from EU and the Global South Local and Regional authorities** focusing on **how to best tackle the 4 "I"** (**I**ntermediary cities, **I**nvesting locally, **I**nclusive governance and citizenship, **I**nnovative solutions for the future of cities and regions) and support the SDGs:

1.1. *Intermediary Cities*

- **Incorporate the decentralization agenda into all European policies and cooperation programs with partner countries and regions**, highlighting the crucial relevance and role of intermediary cities in achieving the SDGs. When assessing public administration reform and institutional architecture in partner countries, the EU must give specific attention to the fact that legislation delegating competence and powers, as well as training for the local level, is effective.

- **Create more funding opportunities for education, culture and creative industries activating an "educational-cultural gateway" soft measure accompanying the main Global Gateway strategy.** A program to support youth-oriented partnerships, exchanges, transfer of knowledge and co-production between European Capitals and other partner continent's Capitals of Culture initiative, leading to the surrounding regions, should for instance be created.

- **Encourage and support the creation of inter-communal infrastructure and mechanisms to provide relevant services to local communities in partnership with the private sector**.

1.2. *Investing locally*

- The **Global Gateway strategy** must be built and implemented with LRA as the key actors. **The EU Delegations shall be invited to work with LRGs** in the implementation of the GG and should facilitate the access to local expertise. **More data about Global Gateway projects** and partners should be available at all levels.

- **LRAs and their agencies** (such as transport, waste, water and energy companies) **should have direct access to financing** for international SDG-related investments and value-driven projects, **without state intermediation**. Application rules, processes and methodologies should be adjusted accordingly, and **more innovative mechanisms of access to guarantees** should be provided to access financing.

- **The initiation and implementation of public-private partnerships should be simplified and promoted under the condition that they are built in a people-centred approach.** Investors must be involved earlier in the projects

1.3. *Inclusive governance and citizenship*

- **Encourage and facilitate direct access of LRAs, civil society organizations and citizens to the Global Gateway dialogue at European and local levels and foster a culture of consultation with multistakeholder systems with LRAs to feed into decision-making processes at all levels.**

- **Conduct a comprehensive assessment of all supported initiatives from a human rights perspective**, based on criteria such as gender parity, social inclusion, equality for LGBTQI diversity, and level of contribution to SDGs, to enhance people and communities' equal access to services and participation in the social, cultural and democratic spheres, including in decision-making processes.

- **Promoting the use of citizen participation tools in Global Gateway programs and ensuring that no segment of the population is left behind.** The most vulnerable populations should have a chance to contribute to Global Gateway projects, notably through targeted capacity building. We encourage the **creation of toolkits to foster citizens inclusion.**

1.4. *Innovative solutions for the future of cities and regions*

- **Avoid 'business as usual' approaches in rolling out initiatives like the Global Gateway in order to ensure sustainability.** Ensure a bottom-up approach by integrating local authorities in Global Gateway decision-making (=a seat at the table), including design and implementation (as public actors), and by advocating for structural decentralisation reforms. **Strengthen inclusive local democracies and empowerment of LRAs** by further promoting decentralised cooperation and by facilitating political dialogue between the national and subnational levels. Promote partnerships between LRAs, civil society, and local communities to foster peace-building dialogue.

- **Provide support to regional and local authorities in the design and implementation of large-scale projects**, notably by funding a pool of project management experts to be mobilized on demand by local authorities. This would enhance LRAs' effectiveness and capacity for innovation.

- **Encourage and develop communal infrastructure and mechanisms to support the provision of public services, including cross-border ones, based on decentralized LRA initiatives that foster intraregional integration**. The regional and local authorities are best acquainted with the specific realities of their communities and territories, they are in a central position to build mutual understanding through expertise on issues relating to borders, such as environmental, social, cultural and economic development. LRAs should therefore play a key role in development processes and engage in direct dialogue with the European Union

Annex: Specific issues raised out of the 10 breakout rooms before final consolidation
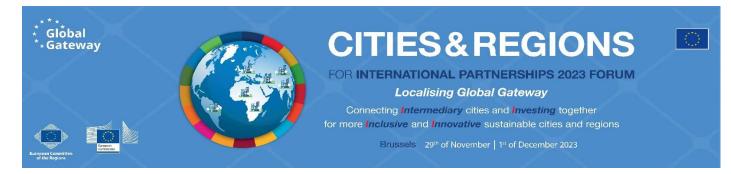
1. ### Inclusive governance and citizenship

Citizen participation, freedom of expression and public spaces, local democracy:

- **Developing a culture of LRA participation in decision-making processes**: Support and reaffirm the strategic importance of **a values-based approach** that relies on **strengthening local democracy** and including citizens at every stage of planning, decision-making, implementation, and evaluation.
- **Value and recognize the role of decentralized cooperation:** its experience, practices, actors, and strategy.
- **Promote instruments of citizen participation in programs and projects** (direct democracy, NGOs, municipal councils, participatory democracy instruments, etc.): Invest in tools that enable communities to better express their needs and in the creation of toolkits allowing communities to share best practices in citizen participation. This could facilitate the connection of potential partners interested in establishing international cooperation, specifying the issues that concern them, what they would like to learn, the type of assistance they seek, the specific knowledge they have, and could impart, etc. It is also necessary to invest in establishing mechanisms that enable communities to articulate and express their needs, such as creating a platform for open cross-dialogue of citizens and stakeholders. A specific platform could be created for the LGBTQI+ community.
- **Reiterate the importance of working with local government and civil society at the local levels**: especially in the case of non-democratic governments. Representatives from Morocco and Mozambique expressed interest in such initiatives.
- **Support innovative research and the production of quality data**: making them widely available and feeding into social sciences and evidence-based policies. There is a demand for the European Commission to publish more data that would be easy to find, read, and understand by all European citizens. In addition, it is crucial to provide data to citizens in regions of the world where projects are being implemented and where decisions are taken without any solid form of data, this should support a greater understanding of the field and more efficient investments.

2. ### Innovative solutions for the future of cities and regions

Resilience cities through disaster preparedness management and civil protection:

- **No effective crisis response is possible without systematized citizens' engagement and trust-building**. Setting up of inter-municipality institutions for coordination, institutionalization of citizens' participation and citizens' outreach (through participatory budgeting, local communities permanent consultation committees within the local institutions, youth-elected shadow municipal councils).
- **No localization is possible without cultural mediation and clarity towards local communities**. Diaspora can have lot of influence in the localisation of Global Gateway as well as concretely contributing to its functioning.
- **No sustainable development is possible without important investments in the human resources (THE PEOPLE)**. Reintegration packages for migrants should be more an investment in their capacity enhancement to meet local labour market requirements as an accelerator for local sustainable development rather than a simple allocation of money allowances.
- **No major crisis can be overcome without consolidated international, regional and local links built around common interests in times of prosperity**. Favouring horizontal partnership among neighbouring regions and

Global Gateway

CITIES & REGIONS
FOR **INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS 2023 FORUM**
Localising Global Gateway
Connecting *Intermediary* cities and *Investing* together
for more *Inclusive* and *Innovative* sustainable cities and regions

Brussels   29th of November | 1st of December 2023

European Committee
of the Regions

European
Commission

communities to increase cities responses to crises and interregional solidarity and synergies (explore the application elsewhere than Europe of mechanisms like the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation).

- **No effective change can be made in achieving concrete results on the ground without clarity on the target involved and on the instruments to be provided** to really make the difference. Support measures under the financial instrument IFSD+ should be put in place to set a financial envelope to clearly support regional and local authorities localising the Global Gateway.

Sustainable energy, mobility and water solutions:

- **Global Gateway should experiment with a different "systemic" approach**, rather than relying on "business as usual approaches" for implementing GG, particularly in relation to finance, capacity and power
- **Localized EU advocacy on decentralisation** is crucial for effective GG. This allows LARs to be seen as autonomous State actors and entitled to a seat at the table.
- **Invest in inclusive local democracies**, involving all relevant actors, with accountable LARs as catalyst
- **A multi-actor and multilevel approach** is crucial to achieving the successful implementation of Global Gateway, this implies involving multiple stakeholders and addressing issues at various levels of the system.
- **EU support for decentralised cooperation and territorial development** is key to empowering LARs

Smart cities and sustainable urban planning, land use and housing:

- **Adopt a system approach** fostering capacity and power, not only finance
- **Decentralization needs to be reinforced**, notably through advocacy.
- **Investing in relevant stakeholders**, connecting citizens and fostering inclusive local democracy, horizontal cooperation and reporting on progress
- **Adopting bottom-up, multi-actor and multilevel approaches**, decentralise Global Gateway
- **Fostering decentralised cooperation and a territorial approach**

Cross-border cooperation:

- **Strengthening capacities in border territories:** In addition to political agreements between nations, it is essential to have cross-border cooperation, multilevel governance, and cooperation funds to achieve effective collaboration between countries. Global Gateway should support processes of strategic planning and the strengthening of cross-border management structures, as well as local capacities.
- **Consider the limitations and specific needs of border territories** and prevent cooperation from being conditioned on the arrival of other investments that, due to their constraints, may not reach these border regions. Global Gateway should not leave border territories behind.
- **The subnational level should play a key role in development processes and have a dedicated space for dialogue with the European Union**, as it is the most present in the border regions and is better acquainted with the specific realities of its territory. It also has expertise in areas closely related to border issues, such as environmental and social concerns, as well as economic development.
- **Local authorities should have access to information about Global Gateway and direct access to European funds** without needing to go through the national level. They should also participate in identifying priorities for European cooperation.

- **Develop programs that positively target border territories and enable cross-border processes**: Showcase and promote European programs that have successfully built thematic cooperation processes, such as EUROsociAL or ADELANTE, and foster technical cooperation as a development model.
- **Enabling the delivery of funds in local and regional authorities**, particularly those in border areas.

3. <u>**Intermediary Cities**</u>

<u>The role of education, culture, and creative industries in building inclusive and sustainable cities able to attract youth:</u>

- **Create more funding opportunities for education, culture and creative industries**
- **Foster cooperation and peer-to-peer learning** between the EU and cultural hubs in partner regions.
- **Develop further capacity building, training and sharing of experiences** to support education, culture and creative industries
- **Encourage and develop public-private partnerships**
- **Prioritizing support to youth** through an integrative framework that considers both EU and local requirements.

<u>City cohesion/coalition for service delivery:</u>

- **Include local authorities as direct beneficiaries** in the role of orchestrators and guardians of the impact, inclusivity, and sustainability of projects in line with existing territorial strategies.
- **Create and fund a pool of project management experts,** who can be mobilized on demand by local authorities and donors to provide advice on project planning and implementation within associations of local authorities.
- **Encourage and support the creation of inter-communal infrastructure and mechanisms to provide services in partnership with the private sector**.
- **Clear and timely guidance is required on how sanctions on national levels may impact cooperation at the regional level**.
- The EU should **ensure that legislation and training at the local level are aligned when addressing public administration reform in partner countries**.

<u>Localising Global Gateway:</u>

- **Providing funds for decentralized cooperation** to enhance municipalities and their stakeholders to develop and manage projects and financial resources
- **Allocating funds to enhance the municipalities' institutional capacity**
- **Targeting funds to municipalities**
- **Considering additional criteria to the allocation of funds**: Such as gender equality, social inclusion, level of socioeconomic development of the city, contribution to SDG's accomplishments, level of innovation and multilevel stakeholder approach.

4. **Investing locally**

The role of private investments in sustainable urban development

- **Ensure that public-private partnerships are done in a people-centred approach**.
- **Build trust among public, private, and civil society to partner earlier in the project development process**.
- **Encourage a coherent policy environment supporting local innovations** by considering the challenging dynamics between national, regional, and local levels.

Financing tools locally available for sustainable urban investments:

- **Financial access for local authorities** should be enhanced in the Global Gateway's framework and in its agenda for local actions.
- **Matching the variety of financing tools to the levels of local capacities**
- **Improve access to data and information on decentralization** in Latin America, particularly subnational finances.
- **Reduce the fiscal gap between legal competencies and the actual needs for the provision of essential services for the population's well-being**, promoting greater financial autonomy, lesser dependence on transfers from the national government, and better access to international sources of financing.
- **Enhance coordination among different levels of government**, fostering governance and political dialogue between the national State and subnational authorities, with special attention to metropolitan and inter-municipal coordination.
- **Incorporate the decentralization agenda in Europe's cooperation with partner countries**, ensuring that EU Delegations in different countries establish concrete action plans benefiting subnational authorities.
- **Reinstate programs and funding that support decentralized cooperation and direct exchanges between subnational governments** of the EU and partner countries. This should focus on priority issues such as the migration crisis, violence, and insecurity in territories, as well as preparing resilient responses to related vulnerabilities like climate change and other risks."