Joint Statement of Local and Regional Governments to the 81st Commission Session of ESCAP

Local and regional government leaders and representatives from urban, rural, and island localities in the Asia-Pacific region convened for the Local and Regional Government Assembly (LRG Assembly) on 22 April 2025, which served as a side event of the 81st Commission Session of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP).

Building on the outcome of the LRG Assembly held at the 12th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development on 24 February 2025 in Bangkok, Thailand, and the Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction on 14 October 2024 in Manila, the Philippines, we reaffirm our commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and Paris Agreement on Climate Change. We propose the development of a regional roadmap for local and regional governments that links these commitments into integrated local actions, especially in the context of Asia-Pacific vulnerabilities to disaster and climate change.

We note that the theme study of the 81st Commission Session on Urban Transformation in Asia and the Pacific: From Growth to Resilience made the following recommendations: enhance regional cooperation for resilient and sustainable urban development; adopt integrated national urban policies to bolster multilevel governance; strengthen subnational and local data collection and reporting to promote evidence-based urban policies; plan for urban demographic changes with strengthened spatial planning and inclusive social policies; and pursue a diversified and innovative approach to urban financing. We emphasise the need for multi-stakeholder partnership and to involve local and regional governments in the process of localising these recommendations.

We acknowledge the recognition of Voluntary Subnational Review (VSR) and Voluntary Local Review (VLR) as tools for national and local government integration. Through the years, the number of Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs) involving local and regional governments have increased around the world. More local and regional governments are engaging in sustainable development goals (SDGs) monitoring and reporting. We encourage the establishment of a regional peer-learning mechanism, which can provide technical and financial support and facilitate exchange of innovative solutions, to scale up VSR and VLR initiatives and systematically link them to the VNR process.

We commend the development of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 national roadmap in the region. This undertaking can support the adoption and implementation of national urban policies. We advocate the replication and regional sharing of experiences on SDG 11 roadmaps and urge governments to co-create national urban policies with local and regional governments and local communities, including the youth.

We recognise the urgency in addressing the climate emergency at the local level. We underscore the ambitious targets and potential of local and regional governments on reducing carbon emissions and fostering climate resilience. We encourage the development of national multilevel governance frameworks, ensuring dedicated roles, funding, and representation for local and regional governments in both the development and implementation of nationally determined contributions (NDCs). We also call for the full recognition and integration of local climate action plans (CAPs) into national climate strategies and NDC updates. Furthermore, city enabling environment assessments reveal varying needs on fiscal decentralisation, public engagement, and capacity building that should be addressed according to national and local contexts.

As frontliners in public service delivery and the closest level of government to the people, we reiterate the need to provide direct access for local and regional governments to development and climate financing. Local actions that need immediate attention should not be delayed by the bureaucracy of business-as-usual. In this context, we call for the reform of financing systems for climate and urban development, including housing, to ensure direct access windows for local and regional governments, and explore the creation of regional climate finance platforms that can better respond to local priorities and accelerate implementation on the ground.

Inclusive governance that ensures equitable participation of local and regional governments and engagement of civil society and marginalised groups for a resilient and sustainable Asia-Pacific is essential. We look forward to a continuous dialogue with all levels of government and all stakeholders to strengthen regional solidarity and amplify diverse local voices towards our common goal for a better future.

APLG
Asia-Pacific Local Government Coordinating Body

Coordinator:

UCLG ASPAC

Members:

C40 CITIES CITYNET COMMONWEALTH LOCAL GOVERNMENT FORUM clgf ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability SOUTHEAST ASIA metropolis UCLG ASPAC UCLG EURASIA UCLG MEWA

Partners:

IGES Institute for Global Environmental Strategies UNDRR UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction ESCAP Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific UN-HABITAT UNU IAS