



Speaking Notes

Plenary Session at the Bonn Symposium 2015: Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals at the Local Level – Strategies and Mechanisms

Executive Mayor: Kgositso Ramokgopa

Salutations:

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Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

The Global Environment and Development Agenda has matured in a dynamic way, from the 1972 Stockholm convention on the Human Environment which gave birth to the universal definition of Sustainable Development (i.e. the triple bottom line), to the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 which saw the birth of the 3 Rio Conventions and Agenda 21; the Millennium Summit in 2000 which saw the adoption of the MDGs through to Rio +20 in 2012 and the subsequent adoption of the 2030 sustainable Development Agenda in 2015. All these milestones led the world on a solid path towards sustainability. The Rio Conventions, in particular the UNFCCC could move us a thousand miles forward if progressive decisions are taken at COP 21 in Paris next month.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are universal in nature and full implementation will require the forging of Global Partnerships and Financing to effectively galvanize action around specific goals. This is a critical lesson to be taken from the implementation of the MDGs which saw the creation of various

instruments, such as; The Global Fund on HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria; the Global Environmental Facility on the environment; the Millennium Challenge Account on economic growth and poverty reduction etc.

Local partnerships are also critical in the attainment of many of these development goals; this lesson can be taken from the implementation of Agenda 21 shortly after the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 which saw many local authorities in partnership with various institutions developing their very own “Local Agenda 21” documents, these enabled local governments to translate global goals into local action plans. It is expected that a similar approach will be taken with the localization of the SDGs, if we are to ensure relevance and secure maximum impact.

Local government has a role to play in supporting the achievement of the 17 SDGs. Many of the proposed goals, including water provision, health, sanitation and housing, food security and transportation call attention to the importance of institutional capacity at local level, and will be supported in whole or in part by the governance and service delivery that is undertaken in cities and local governments.

The heightened challenges around attaining sustainable human settlements call for more imaginative leadership and planning that involves working with communities and putting citizens and natural systems at the centre of planning. Local culture, knowledge and traditions need to inform planning and it should reflect a community-based approach that encompasses diversity, and the environment.

My Expectations from the 2030-Agenda for sustainable development as Mayor of a South African city:

I would expect that the implementation of all SDGs should be multi-sectoral and assume a partnership and collaborator approach. While all of us have a common interest in sustainable development, implementation will differ based on our historical responsibilities and unique financial conditions as well as capabilities.

Equity and Justice needs to be at the center of implementation; for example, if cities in the global south are to prioritise a move towards sustainable production practices, this must be balanced by a prioritised focus on sustainable consumption patterns by cities in the global north.

Goal 11 of the SDGs focuses on Making cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable. And while as cities, we have turned our attention towards the attainment of the 8 targets contained under SDG 11, we also do acknowledge that all SDGs have a local level dimension. I would therefore expect that organised local government institutions will coordinate the localisation of all SDGs and hold local leaders accountable. SDG 16 on building effective, accountable and inclusive institutions requires special attention by all partners, particularly cities, in ensuring transformation of our institution towards the a common sustainable future.

It is very clear that the SDG Monitoring and Evaluation process will be data intensive and require specialised capacity, therefore as a Mayor of an African City, I would expect that as a lesson from the MDG process, part of the initial stages of SDG implementation should include significant investments in capacity for data collection and analysis. We maintain that the continent's narratives must be controlled and shaped by Africans, through vertical integration.

The issue of sustainable development financing remains a puzzle. The MDG implementation focused heavily on Overseas Development Assistance (ODA). This cannot be the case for SDG implementation, especially in consideration of the multiple financial and economic crises faced by many countries, mostly in the global North where ODA is expected to flow from.

As a capital city of South Africa, and having made firm commitments in our long term strategic plan (the Tshwane Vision 2055) to transition to a sustainable economy, we took a conscious decision to explore innovative partnership approaches that move us from a “grant recipient” status to one of a mutual partner through blended financing models in the implementation of sustainability programmes.

We therefore view the implementation of most SDGs from this lens while realising the ODA remains an important catalyst for most targets and that substantial proportion of development finances should be used to develop institutional capacities for domestic resource mobilization.

The biggest challenges in implementation of SDGs at the municipal level:

As we unpack the implementation of the SDGs, we need to keep the original promise of the MDGs, and move from reducing to **ending** extreme poverty, in all its forms. We should ensure that no person – regardless of ethnicity, gender,

geography, disability, race or other status – is denied universal human rights and basic economic opportunities.

However, the unprecedented human migration into urban centers is resulting in rapid urban growth. Cities are at the forefront of managing the impact of unplanned urbanisation, which often results in significant challenges in the provision of adequate infrastructure, service delivery, governance and development, particularly in peri-urban areas where there are often high levels of poverty.

Like most of Africa and other developing countries, South Africa is experiencing continuing urbanisation. The United Nations estimates that 71.3% of the South African population will live in urban areas by 2030, reaching nearly 80% by 2050. South Africa's urban population is growing larger and younger, as individuals and households move into the 'inner-city core' where jobs are created and household incomes are higher.

Nearly two-thirds (64%) of South Africa's youth live in urban areas, whereas the aged population (and no longer economically active) tend to migrate to more rural settlements and secondary cities. The urban centres dominate the country's economy, as cities and large towns produce over 80% of the national gross value added (GVA). Metros are growing twice as fast as other cities and towns and also have much higher (by about 40%) average incomes compared to the country as a whole. Employment also grew twice as fast in metropolitan municipalities than elsewhere and between 1996 and 2012, metros accounted for three-quarters of all net jobs created in the country. Yet, despite this, the 'urbanisation of poverty' is increasing, especially in townships, informal settlements and inner cities, putting pressure on city resources.

For South Africa, the fact that we are yet to fully recover the Apartheid legacy, of racial segregation, poverty, and exclusion from social and economic opportunities presents a significant challenge in our efforts to attain the 2030 sustainable development agenda. Despite significant service delivery and development gains since the advent of democracy in 1994, these spatial patterns have largely not been reversed. The necessary means of implementation focusing on these unique local circumstances will need to be crafted if we are to realise maximum progress in achieving the 169 goals in the SDGs.

Chairperson, in June this year, African Capital Cities convened an inaugural African Capital Cities Sustainability Forum (ACCSF) which led to the adoption of the "*Tshwane Declaration on Advancing Sustainability Leadership in African Cities*".

The main purpose of this forum is to ensure a coordinated approach by African cities on the implementation of common sustainable development priorities. 22 Mayors from African Capital Cities pledged to advance sustainability within the African continent through ground breaking initiatives. We plan to use this forum as a platform for lesson sharing and partnership building. I hosted this inaugural meeting as a Mayor of a South African Capital City and will do so for the next two years while the forum gains momentum. The declaration included a commitment to a coordinated approach towards the implementation of the Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the ACCSFs 2016 program of work will indeed focus heavily on this element.

Different to the MDGs, the new agenda is a global one. From an African perspective: Is this a good thing and what does it mean for poorer countries, such as Least developed Countries (LDCs)?

Chairperson, it has been two months since the adoption of the SDGs by the UN General Assembly. In the lead up to the adoption of the SDGs various sectors and spheres of governments engaged rigorously on the then proposed SDGs. In doing so many took stock of how the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which were set to be replaced by the SDGs were implemented and perceived.

As local governments, and particularly in the African continent, we assessed the global development agenda taking into consideration our unique circumstances that made it difficult for most MDGs to be realized. We have also noted with concern the non- universal nature of the MDGs which by implication meant that developing countries were responsible for the implementation of all but one goals - only goal 8 on Global Partnership for Development warranted active participation of developed countries. MDG Goal 8 was vague with no clear means of implement and therefore remained largely unimplemented.

Chairperson, following RIO +20 in 2012, we actively engaged in various forums to advocate for the universality, differentiated responsibilities as well as measurability of the new development agenda. As African Cities, we are encouraged by the 17 goals and 169 targets that are global in nature, universally applicable and in most instances take account of different national realities, capacities and levels of development. We therefore approach our implementation of the SDGs with the fundamental principle of “*differentiated responsibilities in resolving the common concerns of humanity*” as a beacon of light.

Over and above the poverty and inequality challenges, African Cities are already battling to overcome the impact of climate change, extreme weather conditions in the form of heat waves, hail storms and tropical cyclones are fast becoming regular occurrences. Goal 11 on cities effectively recognises the role of local government in managing risks, mitigating the impact of natural disasters and climate change adaptation, which is a significant threat, particularly in least developing countries (LDCs) and small island developing states (SIDS): in creating inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities and local governments. The principle of differentiated responsibilities becomes pertinent under these circumstances. Means of implementation in the form of financing, technical assistance and technology transfer by the global north must be well defined and measurable.

In Conclusion, as African Cities, we acknowledge that Local government has a role to play in supporting the achievement of the 17 SDGs. Many of the proposed goals, including water provision, health, sanitation and housing, food security and transportation call attention to the importance of institutional capacity at local level, and will be supported in whole or in part by the governance and service delivery that is undertaken in cities and local governments.

Through the African Capital Cities Sustainability Forum, Mayors of African Capital Cities will develop a collaborated approach towards the implementation of the SDGs and lead by example for within the African Continent. We will indeed welcome partnerships from civil society, business and other development institutions as we collectively over towards the full attainment of the goals set in the 2030 Development Agenda

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