

## **Geneva Cities Hub report from the “In focus: SDG11” roundtable, 5 October 2020, Daria Cibrario (Director, Geneva Cities Hub)**

Madam the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe Excellencies,

Distinguished delegates,

Colleagues and partners,

It is my pleasure and honour to deliver the report on the outcomes and recommendations that emerged from this year’s “In Focus: SDG11” roundtable, organized by the UNECE in cooperation with UN-Habitat and the Geneva Cities Hub. The event took place on 5 October, World Habitat Day, and featured a substantial participation by city networks, urban partnerships and initiatives that brought together the voices of cities and local authorities with Geneva-based UN agencies, NGOs, academia, and civil society, to discuss and exchange on the topic of “Supporting city actions for a resilient future”.

I will now share a set of **key outcomes** and **recommendations** that emerged from the discussion.

As for the **outcomes**:

### **1. Multilateralism must be more than ever inclusive and multi-level.**

Opening panellists welcomed the UNECE’s and other UN agencies’ approach that bridges the gap between global institutions and local governments, recognizing and working with cities, and including them in intergovernmental processes to advance the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda.

### **2. Cities are the epicentres and the frontline responders to crises.**

The socioeconomic consequences of COVID-19 are particularly harsh in cities and their communities, which have been at the forefront of the pandemic. Local authorities have led swift responses, redeploying municipal budgets, setting up emergency shelters, and adapting public service delivery.

### **3. Crises in urban settings magnified and exacerbated existing inequalities and vulnerabilities.**

COVID-19 exposed the global housing crisis, and the direct relationship between lack of access to essential public services and public health. It has taken a heavy toll on women, exposed racial tensions, and worsened the challenges of vulnerable groups, including girls, migrants and refugees, indigenous people, and LGBTI individuals.

As for the **recommendations**, the following key messages stood out:

**1. Global challenges need local solutions. Cities and local governments must have a seat at the table in global and national policymaking.**

National crisis management committees need to include local authorities. A special envoy for cities to the UN Secretary-General could be appointed, and mayors' participation in national delegations at the UN General Assembly must be enhanced. New pathways are also needed for local authorities to take part in multilateral processes in their own capacity.

**2. SDG implementation must be fast-forwarded, and there needs to be a systemic paradigm shift that puts local governments and their communities at the centre.**

The global health crisis questions the current production and consumption models. The aspirations of local communities must be placed at the heart of global policy and of action to bring about sustainable change. Recovery plans need to prioritize the protection of our commons, public service delivery and access for all, and must be rooted in human rights.

**3. An inclusive, cooperative, whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach is a pre-requisite for effective, lasting recovery.**

As COVID-19 will leave behind a legacy of socioeconomic hardship, all governance structures and stakeholders need to increase efforts, cooperation, solidarity, trust-building and collective action to ensure that cities become key hubs of inclusion and equal opportunity for all. This requires the meaningful participation of local authorities and of all categories of inhabitants in policy development and implementation.

**4. Empowering local governments, building their capacity and securing adequate resources equates to empowering people.**

Decentralization, subsidiarity, and local autonomy must be strengthened and accompanied by capacity building and adequate funding for local governments. Municipal financial and fiscal systems need to be urgently redesigned.

**5. Good-practice sharing, peer learning and cooperation across departments and all levels of governments are essential to build effective local and national resilience plans.**

We need to strengthen support for city-to-city cooperation, peer learning and cross-fertilization to develop policy solutions that address the specific features of local realities.

**6. Reliable, consistent data collection, management and sound governance systems are critical to identify city needs and meet them with efficient solutions.**

I thank you for your attention, and wish you every success in today's work and deliberations.