



United Nations



Ministry of Foreign
Affairs



CONFERENCE

The impact of economic and financial crisis on Local Governance in Africa: the response of Local Authorities to the new development challenges

Final Recommendations

6 – 7 November 2009

**Palazzo Vecchio
Florence, Italy**

WE, Leaders in Local Governments comprising Ministers in charge of Decentralization and Local Government, Senior Civil Servants, Chairpersons, Associations of Local Governments, and Mayors and Councilors representing different countries of Africa and Europe as well as NGOs gathered for the Conference “*The impact of economic and financial crisis on Local Governance in Africa: the response of Local Authorities to the new development challenges*” held in, Florence, on 6th and 7th of November 2009

Preamble

Noting that the Conference is the follow-up to the First Conference on Decentralization: the new Dimension of Peace, Democracy and Development, held in Florence, Italy 2004 and its Final Declaration; the Ministerial Conference on Leadership Capacity Building for Decentralized Governance and Poverty Reduction for Sub-Saharan Africa, held in Kigali, Rwanda 2005; the Ministerial Conference on Participatory Planning and Budgeting for Effective Local Level Delivery of Services, held in Maseru, Lesotho 2006; the Pan African Conference of Ministers of Local Government on Leadership Capacity-Building for Decentralized Governance and Poverty Reduction in Africa, held in Yaoundé, Cameroon 2008, the 2007 European Parliament Resolution on Local Authorities and Development Cooperation; the 2007 Lisbon Declaration of the EU-Africa Summit; the 2007 European Commission Strategy Paper on Non State Actors; the UCLG Strategic Priorities for 2007-2010; the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action;

Expressing gratitude to the Government of Italy, and in particular the Regional Council of Tuscany and the City of Florence for hosting this conference

Thanking the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN/DESA), for the technical, financial and other contributions that made this conference possible

Acknowledging the critical role of sharing knowledge and country experiences as well as of partnerships on Decentralized Governance and Decentralized Cooperation;

Considering that the “*Euro-African Partnership for Decentralized Governance*” project was established by UN/DESA, the Conference of Regional European Assemblies (CALRE) and the Regional Council and supported by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Regional Council of Tuscany;

Considering that since 2005 the *Euro-African Partnership for Decentralized Governance*, with the support of many Local Authorities and their National Associations, Universities, National Governments and the direct contact among Local Authorities from Europe and Africa, promoted Capacity Building, Partnerships and Networking, and Policies and Strategies on Decentralization;

Acknowledging that the work so far undertaken confirmed the key role of decentralization as a tool for development and the importance of north-south and south-south partnerships among local authorities;

Noting the increased importance of decentralized governance for transforming societies in Sub-Saharan Africa;

Noting how international, national and local actors involved in the decentralization processes are increasingly active and the relevant role of women in these processes, as underlined by the Final Recommendations of the Conference on “*Women in Local Authorities’ Leadership Positions: Approaches to Democracy, Participation, Local development and Peace*” held in Florence, on the 5th of November 2009 as follows:

- To further promote the effectiveness and quality of the participation of women in leadership positions, it is necessary not only to introduce policies to increase the participation of women, but also to reinforce structure systems, cultural values, and norms that foster an effective participation of women in leadership and development programs;
- To increase effective participation of women in public policy-making decisions at the local and national levels, it is necessary to support women as critical agents of change, and to enhance the awareness of men on the vital contribution that women provide to development and in the care economy;
- To support women in heading key organizations, including political parties, by promoting access to training, funds, exchange of staff, study tours and through awareness campaigns;
- To improve the role of women in the economy, it is necessary to promote better access to training, education, economic resources, including access to micro-finance through credit unions and collection of more reliable information about their role in the informal sector;
- To support the exchange of legislative instruments, experiences and best practices with the support of the European regional and local councils by effectively implementing a virtual network for capacity building of women in local authorities in Africa;
- To foster greater collaboration among women in local authorities by effectively implementing south-south and north-south networks of women in local authorities, by fostering twinning arrangements among women in local authorities, by continuing the

valuable efforts undertaken so far through the Euro-African Partnership, as well as by extending its geographical coverage;

- To promote women's leaders networks within regional and national associations of local governments;
- To appeal to African leaders to involve women leaders in peace building processes;
- To appeal to women leaders at the local level to use their positions and influence in advocating for peace;
- To capitalize and further share existing policies and laws on gender participation at the local level, as well as tools such as gender statistics, gender budgeting, data on training of women, innovative practices in addressing MDGs (including the experience of the Region of Tuscany, the Ministry for Mainstreaming Gender development Issues in Liberia and Uganda, etc.);
- To take stock and review past recommendations of the Euro-African Partnership, their implementation and the way forward;
- To hold the next conference on women in local authorities in Africa, within the framework of the Euro-African Partnership, possibly in Liberia, and to hold a Summit Conference on women in the informal sector;

Considering that the ongoing global multiple crises are negatively impacting local communities in Africa in terms of access to basic services and have affected the capacity of the institutions of local governments to respond to the needs of the people ;

Acknowledging that the financial crisis is but one of the multiple crises that Africa has been facing in the last decades and that additional resources are required for local authorities to respond to the needs of their communities;

WE agree upon the following commitments and recommend:

To develop a comprehensive strategy for Decentralized Cooperation that spells out:

- a. Key actors;
- b. Requisite capacity and preparedness;
- c. Potential tools that can be used to develop Decentralized Cooperation;
- d. Potential areas of cooperation;
- e. Guidelines for local governments that are interested in partnerships;
- f. Procedures for matching arrangements;
- g. Funding mechanisms and commitment;
- h. Mechanisms for joint Monitoring and Evaluation;

To establish a focal point within Ministries responsible for Local governments in African countries for Decentralized Cooperation in order to coordinate and monitor related activities;

To re-examine decentralization policies with a view to including local economic development within the investment portfolios of local governments and to recognize local government as an economic actor;

To promote not only transfer of knowledge and competencies from the national to the local level but also to increase the discretionary resources from national to local governments as well as to empower and facilitate local governments to mobilize their own resources;

To encourage public-private and community partnerships in decentralized service delivery;

To build national strategies to deal with technical and political capacity gaps at the local level in view of the social, economic and political changes;

To support the implementation of women's networks in local authorities among African countries and to link African and European networks in this area;

To encourage joint reviews of policies, programs, and resources allocation by national governments and ministries in charge of local government;

To strengthen the presence and participation of local governments and non state actors in the global debate on development cooperation;

To promote decentralization and local governance and reaffirm the strategic role of local authorities in achieving MDGs and resolving conflicts;

To encourage national governments that every actor in development at the local level, including international and national NGOs should operate within the framework of local governments strategic plans of actions;

To encourage national governments to put in place systems of law and institutions which ensure speedy and quick access to justice and to productive resources such as land;

To recognize the role of the local authorities and support them in defining and promoting policies aimed at ensuring food security and access to productive resources;

To promote within the mandate of local authorities strategies for food security and to promote exchanges of good practices through south-south and north-south cooperation;

To establish a framework for collaboration and support for local governments in Europe working with African immigrants to participate in the local development of their countries;

To establish an Observatory, within the Euro-African Partnership Programme, to encourage research and partnerships on decentralized cooperation in strengthening decentralized governance and development cooperation particularly by documenting and analyzing good practices as well as innovative strategies and solutions to governance challenges in order to overcome the multiple African crises;

To further promote and strengthen within the framework of the Euro-African Partnership not only north-south but also south-south decentralized cooperation through structured processes of peer-to-peer learning;

To establish and implement the Euro-African Partnership Foundation for sustaining in the future decentralized governance and decentralized cooperation for the mutual benefit of Africans and Europeans;

We, hereby, the participants request the African authorities, UN/DESA and the Regional Council of Tuscany to continue efforts towards the implementation of these recommendations.