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**Statement**

**by**

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**United Nations Under-Secretary-General**

**Executive Secretary**

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**at**

**Transformation from the ground up: Acting at local level**

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**High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development**

Mr. Chair,

Excellencies,

Ladies and gentlemen,

- Today, we celebrate the transformative actions by local governments worldwide to advance the Sustainable Development Goals amidst ongoing crises.
  - From Africa to Asia, and Europe to Latin America and the Caribbean, local governments are at the forefront of shaping sustainable development in their communities.
  - Voluntary Local Reviews have emerged as a powerful tool for localizing the SDGs and addressing inequalities exacerbated by multiple crises. To date, over 300 VLRs in total have been published worldwide, including 120 in Europe, 13 in North America, 20 in Africa, 85 in Latin America and the Caribbean, 57 in Asia and the Pacific, and 6 in the Arab States region, with more in the pipeline. These reviews not only fill critical data gaps but also directly influence local development plans and budgets, ensuring alignment with national SDG frameworks.
  - Elsewhere, initiatives like *urban observatories* are accelerating SDG localization by enhancing data collection and analysis, empowering cities to make informed decisions, and identify priorities.
  - We, the United Nations Regional Economic Commissions, are working actively to support local governments' efforts to implement SDGs effectively. We do that by providing cities with guidelines for the development of VLRs, technical assistance, and collaborative platforms that amplify their voices at the United Nations, such as the Forum of
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Mayors and the Regional Forums on Sustainable Development.

- However, challenges persist, particularly for smaller cities and rural areas with limited resources and capacity. Tailored approaches based on the SDG framework and supported by VLRs, and on integrated planning and multilevel governance, can align local priorities with national strategies, strengthening cities' capacity to implement projects, improving access to national and *local* financing and resources.
- I wish again to flag the importance of platforms such as the Forum of Mayors, promoting global cooperation, and allowing cities to learn from each other and engage with various stakeholders. This year's meeting of the Forum, entitled "Cities Summit of the Future", will be held in Geneva, on 30 September and 1 October.
- Localizing the SDGs is a shared responsibility requiring commitment, innovation, and collaboration across all sectors and levels. Achieving the 2030 Agenda depends not only on national governments but also on concerted local efforts. We must support and empower local leaders, invest in data-driven solutions, and build resilient communities to thrive amid global challenges.

Thank you.

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