



PRESS STATEMENT

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Issues by ICLEI Local Governments for Sustainability – Africa

From: The Bella Centre, Copenhagen, UN-FCCC COP15

<p>African Local Governments speak out on bold climate action at the local level</p>

African Local Governments joined on Monday in the ICLEI Local Government Lounge at the UN FCCC COP15 to declare their shared commitment to bold and up-scaled local action. They stated that local governments will be the leaders that take the initiative in defining a new future where community resilience, social justice and environmental sustainability are foremost on the agenda.

Councillor Agnes Nthangula, Chairperson of the Health and Social Development Committee, Sol Plaatjie Municipality, South Africa formally presented the African Local Government Declaration on Climate Change (see attached) to key stakeholders, emphasizing that climate change, already a reality in Africa, has immediate implications at the local government level.

These local governments called for urgently needed resources to enable such up-scaled and accelerated local action, particularly for projects that have already demonstrated effective emission reductions and increased community resilience. A strong case was made that support for these local initiatives needed to go beyond financial support in building local capacity and long term sustainability of projects. Development agencies and national governments were called upon to allow for resource allocations that would effectively address the reality of skills shortages and capacity constraints within local governments in order to ensure local ownership and sustainability beyond initial external support.

As part of the Africa Day in the ICLEI Lounge, ICLEI's President, David Cadman, along with UCLG and City of Copenhagen met with South Africa's Chief Negotiator, Alf Wills on Monday for an in-depth discussion about the Copenhagen Climate negotiations. Mr Wills spoke out in support of the African Local Government Statement, emphasizing the need for Local Governments to take substantive local action. He stressed the need for the up-scaling of current finance, equity and for a global climate change regime that provides for the poor. He also said that the G77 proposal specifically emphasized the need for direct access to financing for local governments - something local governments have long called for. The need to focus on the poor was echoed by the local

governments, stating that the urban poor are particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.

Likewise, Dr Victor A Fodeke, Head: Special Climate Change Unit of the Federal Ministry of Environment of Nigeria echoed the need for local action and for a strong, fair and equitable deal as he shared examples of where climate change was already directly affecting the communities in Nigerian cities and towns.

In a South African session that was chaired by Mr Carstens Laugensen, Environmental Attachè, Royal Danish Embassy of South Africa chaired a session where the cities of Cape Town, Durban, Ekurhuleni and Johannesburg each presented their pioneering work on climate change adaptation and mitigation. These presentations highlighted local innovation, commitment and strong political leadership - exactly the kind of action that Copenhagen needs to enable and support on bigger scale. Current initiatives in these 4 metropolitan areas in South Africa range from bold institutional and policy reform, public transport, and decision-support to community awareness, capacity building and the development of long term mitigation scenarios at city level.

Ms Cecilia Njenga from UN HABITAT highlighted some positive developments: "On the African continent, local governments have limited resources and technical capacity but there are many good examples of networking and coming together like the effective network of the 116 islands of the Seychelles that have come together and put climate change on top of their agenda.

The Africa Day concluded with a clear message to Copenhagen:

Communities in Africa's cities and towns are already experiencing climate change impacts. Local Government leaders are already taking bold action on both the mitigation and adaptation fronts. They are ready to up-scale and accelerate their actions. They are ready to lead the way in local action through information sharing and technical networks on the Continent. They need and welcome the support and mandates from their national governments and the international community as they prepare for the challenges in the decades ahead. What they now need most is up-scaled and direct access to financing for these actions. They call on Parties to make a deal in Copenhagen which is strong, fair and equitable and which recognises their pivotal role in addressing climate change globally.

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