 <p>United Cities and Local Governments Cités et Gouvernements Locaux Unis Ciudades y Gobiernos Locales Unidos</p>	<p>Local Government Statement Opening UN-Habitat Governing Council Nairobi, April 2007</p>
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Promoting the Adoption of the International Guidelines on Decentralization

Local governments around the world are pleased to be participating in this session of the UN-Habitat Governing Council. On behalf of the United Nations Advisory Committee of Local Authorities (UNACLA) and of the World Organization of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), I would like to thank the Council Members and the Habitat Secretariat for the important efforts made in the promotion of the Habitat Agenda.

The Dialogue on Decentralisation which took place in this same place two years ago and which was continued at the World Urban Forum in Vancouver clearly reflects the growing partnership between local governments and UN-Habitat.

Aims of effective decentralisation

Local governments have been working for many years towards the international adoption of guidelines on decentralisation, and we are delighted to see our work coming to fruition in the Decentralisation Guidelines. We welcome the guidelines as recognition of the principles and policies that local governments across the world have developed through their experiences over several decades, and as an important step towards an international reference for decentralization which will support better local governance worldwide.

Advocating decentralisation processes might sound abstract and far from daily worries and realities but this is not the case.

These processes address the great and rapid change in demographics that is affecting the world's population and that you have been hearing about today.

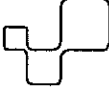
They examine how to control the use of the planet's resources and promote sound governance systems which will foster economic growth.

They look at how to ensure adequate basic service provision for, by and with the community.

They are about creating clear responsibilities for both local authorities, national governments and the international community.

Prerequisites for effective decentralization

Local Authorities cannot, and will not see the International Guidelines on Decentralization as a document destined to end up as a footnote in the UN's larger agenda. By developing these guidelines and advocating their approval by our national governments, we become more

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accountable than before and we commit ourselves as local authorities to do everything possible to consult citizens and ensure participation. Local Officials will be accountable and committed to the common good of society.

We call on national governments to agree that decisions should be taken at the sphere of government closest to the citizens and that local authorities should be supported in becoming even more effective partners. Consequently the functions of local authorities shall be accompanied by measures to build their capacity to exercise these functions. The lack of capacity of local authorities should not be seen as the justification to keep non efficient systems but should be seen as a challenge to be overcome for the good of the communities.

Concerning the relations between Local Authorities and other spheres of government the International Guidelines on Decentralization call for national legislation to acknowledge local authorities as legally autonomous and should be consulted by other spheres of government when dealing with legislation of their concern. Local self-government does not imply opposition to other spheres of government but the capacity to decide on issues that will directly affect the lives of the citizens that local authorities represent. Appropriate financial resources are necessary if effective decentralization is to be achieved and unfunded mandates should be avoided.

Approval of the Decentralization Guidelines

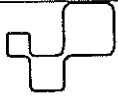
With devolution of the necessary resources and responsibilities, cities have the potential to fight poverty holistically. This means identifying solutions which address basic services including drinking water, sanitation and health on the one hand and linking this with economic growth, inclusion and the promotion of equality on the other.

The adoption of the Decentralization Guidelines, which will be presented to you in Resolution L3, is not only a major achievement for global governance but an important tool to achieve the Millennium Agenda.

True partnerships

Local governments need to work closely with all stakeholders in the governance process to be successful. Public-private and civil society partnerships are crucial to the efficient management of public resources and the improvement of services. Local and regional governments play a crucial catalyst role in putting together public/private/community partnerships for development.

Through their World Organization, United Cities and Local Governments, are lobbying for greater recognition of local government in global governance. We are working through broad decentralized cooperation programmes to develop the capacity of local governments



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and their associations. We are working to increase the number of women in local government and it is stimulating innovation in local governance through research development and exchange.

Our ambitions about the role that local governments need to play in global development are as big as our hopes for a fairer world. We are keen to work towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. We believe that by working together these goals will no longer be the UN Goals but the citizen's goals. This is why we ask the member states of the UN Habitat Council to support the approval of the Guidelines on Decentralization and to commit to presenting these Guidelines before the United Nations General Assembly.

On behalf of the Local Governments of the world I thank you and look forward to working with all of you towards our shared objectives.

