

SDG localization as a driver of urgent climate action

COP27 – Side-Event – Egyptian Pavilion – Blue Zone

14 Nov 2022 | 6:00 pm – 6:50 pm EET | In-person

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Context

While we face a 'moment of great peril characterized by conflicts, climate catastrophe, division, unemployment, massive displacement, and other challenges'¹, the world comes together once more at COP27 to lay out ambitions and reaffirm its commitment to the global climate agenda in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt.

Climate change is an existential threat with very localized implications. Hundreds of millions of people are already being impacted, or likely to be impacted, by climate change consequences, disproportionately affecting vulnerable people. The World Bank estimates that over 100 million individuals could fall below the poverty line in 2030 without rapid and inclusive development that integrates climate action².

The latest Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report highlights that the window to stave off the worst consequences of climate breakdown is narrowing fast. The report points out that global temperatures are now most likely to rise above the 1.5-degree target, which means that climate change risks for cities, settlements, and infrastructure will increase rapidly in the mid-and long-term³.

According to UN-Habitat, urban areas contribute significantly to climate change, accounting for 71 to 76 percent of CO2 emissions, primarily through the consumption of fossil fuels for energy supply and transportation. They are also responsible for between 60 and 80 percent of energy consumption and absorb significant climate risks, such as bearing the climatic extremes of global warming, which are currently predicted at 3 to 4 degrees Celsius⁴.

¹ UN, "Rescuing the SDGs: General Assembly highlights 'world's to-do list', 2022: <https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/09/1126981>

² World Bank, "Shock Waves : Managing the Impacts of Climate Change on Poverty", 2016: <http://hdl.handle.net/10986/22787>

³ IPCC, "Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change. Contribution of Working Group III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change", 2022: <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-working-group-3/>

⁴ UN-Habitat, "Strategic Plan 2020-2023": https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/documents/2019-09/strategic_plan_2020-2023.pdf

Our economic model of investment, consumption, and growth also adds to climate change due to its exploitative extraction of natural resources. This is clearly seen at the local level, where land used for forestry or food production is now occupied, and pollution affects the local population. In addition, these areas are where infrastructure and activities are concentrated, making them susceptible to the most significant impacts of climate change⁵. For instance, in recent years, natural disasters have become more severe and frequent in cities worldwide.

In addition, by 2065, around 6 billion people will live within 200km of a coastline⁶ - putting the cities and towns located by the sea at significant risk. "Ice-melting, sea-level rise, marine heatwaves, and ocean acidification" are some of the unreversible effects to our oceans that climate change is causing⁷. These burdens combined are endangering the planet's ecosystem and can already be felt at the local level. To illustrate, the 2022 UN Ocean Conference's Special Session on LRGs⁸ highlighted the damaged ecosystems, lack of coastal adaptation, and troubled port-city relationships as some of the most pressing issues and emphasized the need to build resilience to protect the local population in coastal areas.

Whereas these are some of the many of climate change's adverse impacts at the local level, climate change may also bring an opportunity to adopt ecological and inclusive pathways by rethinking how we can achieve green, resilient, and sustainable cities and towns – which is at the heart of the localization approach.

"Localizing the SDGs" is a powerful tool to support climate action at the local level since it places territories and communities at the center of sustainable development, if done and managed correctly. In this two-way process, the local meets the national and the global, and vice-versa.

The SDG localization approach offers the required and needed knowledge, tools, resources, and innovative governance models to guide national, subnational, and local governments and other local actors, including communities, to collaboratively achieve the ambitious Paris Agreement targets, which will also contribute to accelerating the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

⁵ UN-Habitat, "Climate Change": <https://unhabitat.org/topic/climate-change>

⁶ McGregor, A. Roberts. C. and Ccusins. F., "Two Degreas- The Built Environment and Dur Changing Climate", 2013.

⁷ UN, "How is climate change impacting the world's ocean": <https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/science/climate-issues/ocean-impacts>

⁸ UN Ocean Conference 2022, LRG Special Event : <https://sdgs.un.org/events/LRGspecialevent-2022UNOC>

Pursuing low emission and climate resilience development has an enormous potential to protect the poorest and most vulnerable who bear the brunt of climate impacts. Sustainable urbanization can play an essential role on this front as it applies a people-centered approach that considers all residents' interests, needs, and aspirations⁹. Thus, sustainable urbanization can bring opportunities to address environmental sustainability and develop resilience in cities that leave no one behind. For instance, it can mitigate and adapt urban growth through an inclusive approach that focuses on creating opportunities for disabled people, youth, and women. As well as reduce and minimize environmental degradation and adverse effects of climate that include least developed areas, which are often neglected.

Likewise, action on climate change provides an unprecedented opportunity to unlock massive economic and social benefits that can help us achieve the SDGs at the local level. Recent studies outlined by UNDP have found that bold climate action could trigger at least US\$26 trillion in economic benefits by 2030, create over 65 million new jobs and avoid 700,000 premature deaths¹⁰.

Moreover, the localization approach promotes the participation of all governments and stakeholders, which is crucial to protect our planet. Innovative multi-level and multi-stakeholder partnerships can harness inclusive governance and decision-making that builds and maximizes effectiveness in climate change-related policymaking.

In this scenario, the Local2030 Coalition – the UN System-wide platform and network for supporting and accelerating SDG localization– is promoting environment-related targets as part of its 10-year strategy¹¹ to make cities and towns more resilient while addressing the need to push for adaption and green transitions (clean energy, blue economy, multi-modal mobility, circular economy, etc.). Besides, to overcome the required global climate action coherence and coordination needed to adapt and scale up initiatives, the Coalition is enabling multi-level and multi-stakeholder collaboration by operating as a convening space to strengthen coordination within and beyond the UN-System.

⁹ UN-Habitat, “The value of sustainable urbanization, 2020: https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2020/10/wcr_2020_report.pdf

¹⁰ UNDP, “100th Meeting of the Development Committee”, 2019: <https://www.undp.org/speeches/100th-meeting-development-committee>

¹¹ SEI, Local2030 Coalition for the Decade of Action, 2021: <https://www.sei.org/publications/local2030-coalition/>

The Government of Egypt is a prominent supporter of SDG localization, as it was one of the first countries to develop its Sustainable Development Strategy “SDS” 2030 in addition to volunteering to present its localization efforts during the HLPFs starting from 2016 onwards. The country has also reviewed its 2014 SDS and developed its second version with a clear direction towards just, inclusive and equitable development with a special emphasis on the localization of the SDGs to ensure that no one and no place is left behind. Being the host of COP27, the country upholds its commitment to accelerate global climate action at the national, subnational, and local levels and inspires others to follow.

Objective of the session

The Local2030 Coalition and the Government of Egypt are joining forces in the framework of COP27 to promote a multi-level and multi-stakeholder discussion on the importance of SDG localization to push climate action. To ensure local actors are equipped to overcome climate-related challenges while achieving the SDGs, the main objective is to:

- (i) inspire local action by putting forward solutions and innovative partnerships that can be easily adapted and scaled up, and
- (ii) call for technical support and increased public and private finance for locally driven initiatives.

Mains points of discussion

The event will outline how the localization of the SDGs can drive urgent and radical action to transform local systems and contribute to limiting global warming. Speakers will share best practices and transformative solutions at the local level that contribute to mitigating climate change and support adaptation and resilience efforts, including how they embrace meaningful action on loss and damage. In addition to analyzing how local action can help stop the climate breakdown, speakers will highlight the integrated and interrelated nature of their actions and how they support overcoming other complex and interconnected crises.

Participants

Member states, local and regional governments, UN entities and civil society leaders.

Format

The event will be hosted fully in English, in person, and only available for pre-registered attendees.

Agenda

14 NOVEMBER 2022 - starts at 6:00 PM EET (Cairo)	
Opening	
6.00 pm – 6.18 pm (18 min)	<p><u>Introduction by the moderator</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Erfan Ali, Representative, Regional Office for Arab States, UN-Habitat <p><u>Welcoming remarks</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, UN Under-Secretary-General, and Executive Director of UN-Habitat <p><u>Keynote speech</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Dr. Hala El-Said, Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Government of Egypt
Panel discussion: SDG localization as a driver of urgent climate action	
6.18 pm – 6.50 pm (32 min)	<p>Moderator</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dr. Erfan Ali, Representative, Regional Office for Arab States, UN-Habitat <p>Speakers</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Dr. Hala El-Said, Minister of Planning and Economic Development, Government of Egypt • H.E. Maimunah Mohd Sharif, UN Under-Secretary-General, and Executive Director of UN-Habitat • H.O. Fatma Şahin, Mayor of Gaziantep Metropolitan Municipality, Turkey • UN Assistant Secretary-General and UNDP Representative • Civil Society Representative