

Joint Statement of Local and Regional Governments to the 13th Asia-Pacific Forum for Sustainable Development

Local and regional government (LRG) leaders and representatives convened for the Local and Regional Government Assembly on 23 February 2026, which served as an associated event for the local authorities major group at the 13th Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development.

The LRG constituency, organised through the Asia-Pacific Local Government Coordinating Body (APLG) and facilitated by the United Cities and Local Governments Asia Pacific (UCLG ASPAC), reiterates our commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, acknowledging the need for accelerated localisation and action at the local level, given the years remaining for this global vision.

We note the Asia-Pacific commitment, including the adoption of the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 and the ASEAN Declaration on the Right to a Safe, Clean, Healthy, and Sustainable Environment, both of which complement the 2030 Agenda. While these frameworks originate in ASEAN, their principles resonate across the wider Asia-Pacific region. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and ASEAN's people-centred and rights-based approach intertwine in local public service delivery.

The review of SDG 6 on clean water and sanitation, 7 on affordable and clean energy, 9 on industry, innovation and infrastructure, 11 on sustainable cities and communities, and 17 on partnership for the goals, comes at a crucial time when the region is facing the severe impacts of climate change. Local and regional governments are on the frontlines of climate impacts but still lack direct and adequate access to climate finance. We reiterate the need for simplified, direct, and concessional climate financing for local and regional governments, including the Fund for Responding to Loss and Damage, Adaptation Fund, and other relevant funds and mechanisms including those in multilateral development banks.

We emphasise that localisation is a critical enabler of the achievement of the SDGs which should be supported and strengthened. We acknowledge the growing support from the UN, the international community, and national governments through programmes on the Voluntary Local Reviews (VLRs) and Voluntary Subnational Reviews (VSRs), where appropriate. There are extensive efforts to align local development plans with national development plans as reflected in the reviews developed in the Asia-Pacific region. Mainstreaming and institutionalising these reviews into national and local processes can foster multi-level and multi-stakeholder collaboration.

In line with the 13th APFSD theme, transformative, equitable, innovative, and coordinated actions are being undertaken by local and regional governments to attain the SDGs.

On SDG 6, local and regional governments are working towards universal access to safely managed drinking water and sanitation services. Nature-based solutions, such as rainwater harvesting systems, are being utilised in response to growing demand for water supply. Challenges remain in data collection and the maintenance of water quality, wastewater treatment capacity, and equitable water and sanitation access, requiring infrastructure investment and maintenance in urban and rural areas. We are alarmed by the UN report on global water bankruptcy and call for holistic and sustainable water governance to ensure the right to clean and safe water, specifically for vulnerable urban communities and informal settlements

On SDG 7, local and regional governments are striving for affordable and clean energy. There is increasing focus on energy efficiency and renewable energy utilisation in public spaces and government buildings. However, there are observed gaps in household-level data that could provide insights into tailored initiatives which may serve as catalysts for local green jobs and economic resilience.

On SDG 9, local and regional governments are embarking on digitalisation of services to enhance public service delivery, transparency, and accountability. This ensures that technology remains a driver of people-centred

development. The digital divide, particularly internet access and digital literacy in urban and rural areas, needs to be addressed through infrastructure investment and targeted education initiatives.

On SDG 11, local and regional governments are responding to the imperative need of this rapidly urbanising region including through transit-oriented development and social housing projects. . Integrated urban planning is essential to strategically link housing and transport projects to climate-resilient infrastructure and nature-based solutions to ensure long-term sustainability. Local disaster risk reduction and management plans are increasingly in place, and the number of trained first responders has increased through regular training. There is an opportunity to further strengthen risk-informed urban planning by integrating disaster resilience, climate adaptation, and inclusive community preparedness into land use and infrastructure development. Increased waste generation continues to be a challenge despite community-level action, requiring a transboundary approach and strengthened policies on extended producer responsibility. Provision of safe, inclusive, and green public spaces also needs to accelerate in the region.

On SDG 17, local and regional governments remain true to people-centred and planet-centred development through inclusive and participatory local governance ensuring the meaningful engagement of youth, civil society, the private sector, and other key community stakeholders. Cooperation amongst national and local governments facilitates knowledge exchange, including on SDG localisation and VLR development. However, there is a need to strengthen urban governance to enable local resource mobilisation for SDGs as well as to enhance financing mechanisms, strategic partnerships, and intergovernmental support

To further support SDG achievements in the region, the LRG constituency recommends: 1) alignment of national, subnational, and local development priorities with adequate resource allocation; 2) enhancement of data system reflecting national, subnational, and local-level indicators with shared access for responsive, data-driven, caring governance, and evidence-based policymaking; 3) institutionalisation of LRG engagement in national SDGs mechanisms to sustain multi-level governance; 4) enhancement of access to local finance for LRGs; and 5) strengthen the Asia-Pacific Local Government Coordinating Body platform as a knowledge and learning hub for LRGs.

As we chart the course towards the future, not only for the Asia-Pacific region but for the world, let us remember that we are one humanity living on one Earth. Let us remain steadfast to our shared goals for people, planet, and prosperity.



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