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Subject: EU cooperation with cities and local authorities in third countries
- Council conclusions (25 June 2018)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on the EU cooperation with cities and local authorities in third countries, as adopted by the Council at its 3628th meeting held on 25 June 2018.

EU cooperation with cities and local authorities in third countries**Council conclusions**

1. The Council recalls the international and EU policy framework, including the new European Consensus on Development,¹ for ensuring strategic engagement with cities and local authorities in developing countries, stressing amongst other elements the principles of "Cities for All". The Council strongly underlines that sustainable urban development as well as inclusive, balanced, integrated territorial and urban policies are essential for achieving Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11 as well as all the other SDGs. The Council calls upon the Commission to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at local level and to make full use of the policy framework and all available instruments to effectively optimise the benefits of intensified and innovative cooperation with cities and local authorities in partner countries.
2. The built-up areas of cities in developing countries, particularly in Asia and Africa, are expected to increase in size by 200% by 2030. Urbanisation and associated challenges are also significant in other regions, including in Latin America and the Caribbean as well as in the EU Neighbourhood. The continued rapid pace of urbanisation implies that the fulfilment of EU policy objectives can only be achieved through strengthened partnerships with cities and relevant local authorities in third countries.

¹ The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the New Urban Agenda; Council conclusions on Local Authorities in Development, July 2013.

3. Many cities and local authorities are increasingly faced with the challenges of urban poverty, social exclusion and spatial inequality, over-crowding, conflict, crime and violence, vulnerability of infrastructure, poor basic service delivery, and environmental degradation. Cities and local authorities remain at the forefront of most humanitarian crises. The vulnerability of cities to epidemics and disasters and to the impacts of climate change increases because of rapid population growth and unplanned urbanisation. Unprecedented migratory and forced displacement flows driven by geopolitical, humanitarian, economic and environmental factors further exacerbate these urban challenges. In such contexts, women and girls are disproportionately exposed to an increased risk of insecurity and violence.
4. The Council is strongly committed to boosting the potential of cities as hubs for sustainable and inclusive growth and innovation as well as to enhancing the role of local authorities in this regard. The Council welcomes the Commission Staff Working Document on EU cooperation with cities and local authorities in third countries.²
5. The Council stresses that effectively addressing urbanisation challenges requires a paradigm shift from the current sectorial approach to a territorial perspective that enhances urban-rural linkages and integrates the three dimensions of sustainability in urban development whilst ensuring coherence between urban and rural development policies. The EU and its Member States need to devise diversified strategies, instruments and procedures and to conduct effective policy and political dialogues in support of impactful and result-oriented partnerships with cities and local authorities in partner countries.

² 9095/18 - SWD(2018) 269 final

6. The Council emphasises the importance of the continued promotion of good governance at the level of cities and local authorities. The Council further stresses that effective systems of multi-level governance and sound policy and legal frameworks at national and sub-national levels are essential. A conducive and enabling policy and regulatory environment is needed to allow local authorities to effectively implement sustainable urban policies and a territorial approach to local development. The Council recognises the importance of inclusive multi-stakeholder processes, including civil society and the private sector in local governance, as well as sound humanitarian and development approaches linking sustainable development solutions, urban planning and resilience. The Council notes that many actors in EU Member States are providing support to strengthen local governance in partner countries.
7. The Council further stresses the need for strengthening the technical and managerial capacity of cities and local authorities for developing and delivering integrated, multi-sector urban planning policies, including tools for active engagement with citizens. Building on a human rights-based approach, this should be done in conjunction with empowering rights-holders to claim their rights.
8. The Council recognises the very substantial investment needs and corresponding financing gaps faced by cities and local authorities. The competencies and capacities of cities and local authorities to design and implement fiscal policies for municipal finance and revenue generation are essential where such powers have been devolved. The Council invites the Commission to step-up efforts to support public finance management and own source revenue at the local level.

9. The Council also encourages the Commission to support, whenever possible, local capacities and efforts to attract private capital investment, notably by using blending facilities and further exploring innovative financing models and partnerships, including those developed by Member States' local authorities. Public private partnerships can play a key role in creating smart, sustainable and resilient cities. The Council calls for a swift and effective support to sustainable urbanisation, including by mobilising additional finance offered by the European External Investment Plan and its "Sustainable Cities" window.
10. The Council recognises the potential of cities and local authorities to bring about a green and circular economy as a model for inclusive growth and that cities are crucial in addressing climate challenges. The Council encourages the Commission to promote green and resilient cities, by supporting the transition towards urban low-carbon and climate resilience with a focus on sustainable public transport.
11. The Council underlines the importance of public space and cultural heritage as contributing the social, economic and political functions of cities.
12. The Council recognises that mega-cities and metropolitan areas are engines of the global economy and that primary and secondary cities are hubs that drive regional and local growth and job creation. In this context, the Council recognises the importance of stimulating an enabling environment for the private sector in particular micro and small-sized inclusive and social enterprises and innovative market solutions while encouraging a transition from the informal to the formal economy. The Council calls for a specific focus on creating better educational and employment opportunities for women, youth and persons with disabilities.
13. The Council encourages the Commission to further support "smart-city" approaches, including by helping local authorities and cities in partner countries to put in place the digital foundations, including the necessary connectivity and accessibility, for the deployment of e-governance services and resource efficient solutions. The Council calls upon the Commission to support digitalisation as a positive force to create employment and socially responsible entrepreneurship thereby supporting the role of cities as drivers of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

14. Engagement with cities and local authorities should seek to introduce more transparency, inclusive governance and accountability in public funding and the delivery of public services and should integrate elements on best practices for tackling corruption and improving land rights and tenure security for all. The Council also stresses the need to promote the active and meaningful participation of residents in planning, implementing and evaluating relevant local actions and public services.
15. The Council underlines the importance of promoting inclusive and safe cities and of addressing the drivers and effects of inequality, marginalisation and segregation within the city and between different cities. It encourages the Commission to mainstream the inclusion of marginalised groups and vulnerable people, including people with disabilities, the elderly, forcibly displaced persons and migrants in EU support to cities and local authorities in third countries. As some cities and local authorities increasingly face migratory and refugee flows, the Council encourages the Commission to continue to support cities and local authorities that are hosting migrants and refugees.
16. Gender equality and women's empowerment in urban areas should be prioritised, as well as the role of young people as drivers for democracy, development and transformation. The Council calls on the Commission to support local capacities to enhance the safety and security of women and girls in urban areas as well as to improve land rights and tenure security for all.
17. The Council encourages the Commission Services and the EEAS to integrate urban-related issues in thematic policy and political dialogue, and to deepen their structured dialogues with cities and local authorities. The Council stresses the importance of promoting people-to-people links at local level and recalls that the use of tools such as decentralised cooperation, twinning for cities and local authorities and city pairing has good potential for strengthening the capacity of cities and local authorities alongside institutional cooperation and technical support. It invites the Commission to speed up action in this area and, where relevant, integrate twinning in future urban development programmes.

18. The EU and its Member States recognise the important role of UN-Habitat in supporting sustainable cities.
 19. The Council emphasises that particular support should be given to ensuring an integrated and multi-sectoral approach to cities and local authorities, both urban and rural, in EU external assistance.
 20. The Council invites the Commission to provide regular updates to the Council on progress made on the implementation of the cooperation with cities and local authorities in third countries. It also encourages the Commission to put in place an adequate forum to regularly exchange information, experience and knowledge with EU Member States and relevant partners on cooperation with cities and local authorities in third countries.
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