The forum of local authorities: “Territorialization as a lever to accelerate the implementation of ndcs in Africa: the contribution of associations of african local authorities for the mobilization of african cities in favor of climate action.”

The second Pre-COP 26 Forum was held in Cotonou, Benin from February 27-28, 2020, with an audience of 200 representatives of cities, local and regional authorities and African non-state actors under the theme: “The contribution of associations of African local authorities in the mobilization of African cities in favor of climate action.”

I - Context and objectives

The climate emergency, announced by the Secretary General of the United Nations in September 2019 at the Climate summit, calls for greater creativity in the mobilization of key players, in particular local communities, and supporting the collective effort to close the gap in the last special report of the IPCC in relation to the adaptation and mitigation goals formulated by the Paris agreement.

With this prospect in mind, the Initiative of the Covenant of Mayors for Sub-Saharan Africa (CoM SSA), launched in November 2015 by the European Union (DEVCO Directorate General), constitutes an appropriate platform to strengthen the bottom-up approach and raise the energy and climate challenges in Africa. An increasing number of local authorities in Africa, who wish to join the CoM SSA initiative, now provides proof that it is appropriate to include local authorities in the process of the implementation of NDCs in Africa.

Within this context and on the eve of COP 26 in Glasgow, the holding of this 2nd forum in Cotonou, Benin, rightly considered as a leading country at the regional level in the commitment to face the challenges of the climate emergency, comes at a timely moment to provide an answer to the following questions: How can associations of local authorities in Africa mobilize cities to meet the challenges of the climate emergency and seize the opportunities that present themselves; and what must be done to achieve such a goal?

The main objective of this forum is to:

• Mobilize and formalize local climate action through the adhesion of all the municipalities of Benin to the initiative of the Covenant of Mayors for Sub-Saharan Africa (CoM SSA);
• Strengthen vertical coordination by signing a memorandum between the central and local levels;
• Launch the accreditation of UCLG Africa with the Green Climate Fund and the adoption of a local government program for the implementation of NDCs in the WAEMU area.

II- The course of proceedings and the conclusions reached

With the participation of more than 120 people, including 90 mayors representing the municipalities and cities of the WAEMU area in particular, the opening session was chaired by Mr. Abdoulaye BIO CHANE, Beninese Minister of State in charge of Planning and Development, in the presence of Mr. Alassane SEIDOU, Beninese Minister of Decentralization and Local Governance, Mr. Luc SETONDJI ATROKPO, President of the
National Association of Municipalities of Benin (ANCB), Mr. Jean Pierre ELONG MBASSI, Secretary General of UCLG Africa, Mrs. Véronique JANSEN, Chargé d’Affaires of the European Union in Benin, and Mr. Bouri SANHOUIDI, Permanent Representative of UNDP in Benin.

During the session, speeches emphasized the leadership of Benin, which is hosting the Forum of Local Authorities on the Climate Agenda for the second time. Speakers underlined the importance of this forum on the eve of the COP 26 and the role of local authorities in the implementation of actions to meet the challenges of climate emergency and seize the opportunities offered to them, particularly in terms of financing.

At the end of the opening session, the President of the ANCB signed the accession on behalf of all the municipalities of Benin to the Covenant of Mayors for Sub-Saharan Africa CoM SSA. To strengthen vertical coordination, a memorandum of understanding was signed between the Ministry of the Living Environment and Sustainable Development, the ANCB and UCLG Africa on the territorialization of the NDCs and access to climate finance. These two signing ceremonies confirmed Benin’s desire to be at the forefront of the territorialization of the NDCs.

To meet the goals of this forum, sessions were organized around five themes, namely:

- **The governance framework:** Identifying governance tools and mechanisms that need to be developed in order to strengthen the role of African Local Authorities in the mobilization of African cities in favor of climate action that is aligned with national commitments.

- **The strategic framework:** Identifying advocacy strategies to be put in place to position the National Association of Mayors as a key partner in the implementation of NDCs.

- **The operational framework:** Experiences to be shared as part of the implementation of tools and instruments strengthening the bottom-up approach (development of SEACAP process).

- **The financing framework:** How to mobilize and further accelerate the financing of energy and climate plans at the territorial level.

- **The cooperation framework:** How to further structure cooperation around the implementation of NDCs in Africa.
The following recommendations resulted from these debates:

- Improve the institutional and regulatory framework governing the decentralization process;
- Ensure a multi-level governance framework that promotes the consistency of territorial climate action with national programs and NDCs;
- Strengthen the bottom-up approach starting from the Locally Determined Contributions (LDCs), by taking advantage of the ongoing revision of the NDCs;
- Support the accreditation of UCLG Africa by the countries of the WAEMU region with the Green Climate Fund;
- Strengthen the data collection, monitoring, reporting and verification framework for the implementation of the Climate agenda in our territories;
- Subscribe to the establishment of a Readiness Africa program targeting local and regional governments with a view to initiating the transition to sustainable and resilient local development.