



PRESS RELEASE

2020 HLPF: Regional governments and the international community call for international cooperation and global ambition to achieve the SDGs in times of COVID-19

New York, 13 July 2020 - The event “2030 Agenda: from global emergencies to solutions at the regional level” was held online on 10 July at the margins of the United Nations 2020 High-Level Political Forum. Regions4 gathered a high-level panel of international organisations and regional governments to jointly reflect on how to emerge stronger from the COVID-19 crisis by designing recovery plans aligned with the 2030 Agenda.

Moderated by the international journalist, Ms **Silvia Intxaurreondo**, the event had the participation of: **Mr Alfons Röblom**, Minister of Development of Aland Islands; **Ms Elena Moreno**, Regions4 President & Deputy Minister for Environment of Basque Country; **Mr Pere Aragonès**, Vice-president of the Government of Catalonia & Minister of Economy and Finances; **Mr Sergio Graf Montero**, Regions4 Vice-President for America & Secretary of Environment and Territorial Development of Jalisco; **Ms Itziar Gomez**, Minister for Rural Development and Environment of Navarre; **Ms Aatimad Zahidi**, Regions4 Vice-President for Africa & Member of the Committee on Territorial Management and Development and Environment of Rabat Salé-Kenitra; **Mr Eduardo Trani**, Subsecretary of Environment of São Paulo; **Ms Lotta Tahtinen**, Chief of Outreach and Partnerships Branch at UN DESA Division for Sustainable Development; **Mr Johannes Krassnitzer**, Coordinator of the UNDP ART initiative; and **Ms Aziza Akhmouch**, Head of the Cities, Urban Policies and Sustainable Development Division at OECD.

At the opening remarks, Regions4 President & Basque Deputy Minister for Environment, Ms Elena Moreno, highlighted that “*We are now in a moment to reflect on what we have learned so far from the pandemic and what we hope will be a sustainable and resilient way out of it. However, the post-pandemic scenario should not mean a return to previous procedures in our administrations. We must take the pandemic as a historic opportunity to collectively work towards social, economic, technological and environmental transformations guided by the 2030 Agenda*”.

Regions4’s event discussed and showed examples of how regional governments are building back better, greener, and fairer, getting back on track toward the 2030 Agenda, and putting a spotlight on the need to strengthen multilevel governance. Panellists shared their experience and exchanged on a recovery which would support the most vulnerable, guarantee access to information, mitigate the dramatic economic impacts, enhance climate action, and ensure the preservation of biodiversity, among others.



Regional governments and the international community called for multi-stakeholder collaboration for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, the acknowledgement of the key role played by regional governments in localising the SDGs and in ensuring policy coherence, and the value of decentralised data for better decision making, higher ambition and action to combat the global emergencies.

From global emergencies to solutions at the regional level

Lotta Tahtinen, opened the discussion highlighting the importance of stakeholders' engagement in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda, stressing both the collaboration of all levels of government for policy coherence. *"This is not the time to forsake the 2030 Agenda, quite the contrary. This is the time to engage in a strengthened dialogue between different levels of government and all stakeholders on how the SDGs can provide a way for us all to build back better"*, she stated.

Johannes Krassnitzer continued the discussion on multi-stakeholder collaboration stating: *"Implementing the SDGs by regional governments is about effectiveness and legitimacy of the policies for social cohesion as part of a multi-level governance system"*, stressing the importance of multilevel governance in the achievement of the 2030 Agenda.

In regards to how regions are supporting industry and businesses struggling to cope with the economic fallout from the pandemic, **Aatimad Zahidi** stated *"the National government in coordination with regional governments have set up economic committees to analyze the situation and facilitate support and grants to businesses. We converted textile factories to manufacture masks, we are assisting the agroindustry to ensure supplies and we are maintaining the health and safety standards mandated by WHO"*. She also highlighted the importance of linking the recovery to sustainable development making Rabat's priority to transition towards a renewable energies model.

Sergio Graf Montero highlighted the need of multi-level instruments that facilitate financing mechanisms for the recovery from the pandemic stressing that *"the credits for the economic reactivation must be made from an SDGs perspective for a full and long-term reconstruction."* Moreover, he underlined the need to continue fostering multi-level governance to develop environmental policies that lead to an economy reactivation that does not endanger the much-needed ambition to protect biodiversity and stop deforestation.

The relationship between the recovery from the pandemic and other global emergencies such as climate change were further addressed by **Itziar Gómez** who stated: *"The health of people, both individually and collectively, are undoubtedly linked to our planet's health. Therefore, shared leadership is essential to face climate change and protect biodiversity"*.



Furthermore, **Eduardo Trani** also underscored the necessity of integrating the SDGs and the Paris Agreement into recovery plans, and highlighted the commitment of Sao Paulo to continue implementing policies that protect the environment as *“the effects of natural disasters derived from deforestation and climate change are something we in Brazil experience first-hand”*.

Aziza Akhmouch spoke about the use of the SDGs as a policy tool and the importance of disaggregated data stating that: *“We need to push the statistical and measurement frontier and to go granular with SDGs data. If we do not do that and we continue to rely on national averages, we are going to mask huge regional disparities in the achievement of the SDGs and we will not be able to develop place-based responses and targeted subnational action.”*

Alfons Röblom continued the discussion on how to protect hard-won development progress on SDGs, highlighting that *“there is no difference between handling the pandemic and moving towards a more sustainable world. They are connected and it is the only way forward. The more we work towards a sustainable society, the more resilient we are to face this and other upcoming crises.”*

Lastly, **Elena Moreno** further continued the discussion highlighting the key role of regional governments in the implementation of the global agendas and called for an inclusive High-level Political Forum that maintains a solid dialogue with subnational governments acting as a platform to monitor, show and exchange regions efforts, stating: *“the time has come to promote a new governance framework that includes regional governments in decision-making at the international level”*.

Regions4 Declaration for an inclusive, resilient, and sustainable recovery

Recognizing their role as key actors at the forefront of the pandemic, the Regions4 constituency launched on 18 June the Declaration *“Subnational governments actions to combat global emergencies and build a sustainable post-pandemic world”*, calling for a sustainable, resilient and just recovery, which includes an accelerated response to the climate and biodiversity crises worldwide. Furthermore, the Declaration urges for a concerted and coordinated response among all levels of government and a strong and proactive United Nations system that reflects the current context and includes subnational governments in the decision-making, implementation, and monitoring processes. The full Declaration is available [here](#).



Regions4

Sustainable Development



About Regions4

Regions4 (formerly known as nrg4SD) is a global network that solely represents regional governments (states, regions and provinces) before UN processes, European Union initiatives and global discussions in the fields of climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development. Regions4 was established in 2002 at the World Summit in Johannesburg and currently represents over 40 members from 22 countries in 4 continents. Through advocacy, cooperation and capacity building, Regions4 empowers regional governments to accelerate global action. For more information, visit: www.regions4.org

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NOTE: The recording of the session can be accessed at [Regions4 YouTube channel](#).