Decalogue for the post COVID-19 era

An opportunity to take responsibility towards future generations

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UCLG
United Cities
and Local Governments

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Local and Regional Governments, allies at the forefront leading solidarity

In a context of unprecedented and universal challenges we, the local and regional governments around the world, are at the forefront of the efforts to overcome these proving times as allies of other spheres of government, of the scientific community, and as global actors with important transformational and convening power.

This pandemic has galvanized how critical our role is in raising public awareness and maintaining the functionality of basic public service provisions and has required the rapid development of new and adapted services to support sanitary measures, all while ensuring the protection of the local public officials who facilitate them.

Further, we are making special efforts to support the most vulnerable in our cities and towns, we are fostering solidarity among territories and putting measures in place against discrimination, exclusion, and addressing inequalities.

Solidarity has become a beacon of security, and it should guide the transformations we need. Local and regional governments have demonstrated their capacity to act as promoters and guardians of this solidarity both nationally and internationally.

The sacrifices of our communities cannot go unnoticed

As we progress in addressing health challenges, currently deserved of our undivided attention, we must also focus on how to avoid a transformation from a health crisis into a global social crisis.

We, the leaders of local and regional governments around the world, are looking ahead, well aware that our cities, towns, and territories will never be the same in the aftermath of this crisis.

This crisis challenges many of our models and puts a magnifying glass on the many shortcomings we were already aware of, such as the need to preserve public service provision and, particularly, the health care for citizens, the need to reduce the digital divide particularly for child education and to facilitate teleworking, the urgency to ensure adequate housing and basic services for the more vulnerable population and to secure livelihoods.

This crisis has hit hardest among the most vulnerable and invisibilized populations, migrants, in particular, but also individuals who live and work in informal environments (particularly women), are experiencing added fragility beyond the pandemic itself.

We have been fostering collective learning from the very beginning of this pandemic, and we will continue to do so, asking the thought-provoking questions that will need to guide our actions both in the immediate aftermath but also beyond the initial post-COVID-19 recovery phase. We, local and regional governments, will continue to work tirelessly, learning and supporting each other as a worldwide system of cities, local governments and regions to lead the discussion with communities on how our future will be shaped.

The SDGs, the framework for transformation

The sacrifices being made will reflect in future generations, debt and investments need to be coupled with robust plans for a sustainable future. The Local 2030 principles and the SDGs remain, now more than ever, a valid reference to frame the transformational measures being implemented.

We are aware that the only way forward is via co-creation, with our communities and local actors –including the private sector- and with full collaboration between different spheres of government.

We are convinced that a strong multilateral governance system and a new collaborative governance culture that can guide the steps in such interconnected realities is necessary, we present a package of measures for the aftermath.

The Decalogue for the post COVID-19 era

1.   Guaranteeing Public Services

Development of strong systems of universal health care, supported by strong basic service provision.

Protection of local service provision systems that shall continue to run, even in critical conjunctures.

Public transportation, all over the world, ensures key workers are able to go to their working spaces, and is essential to guarantee the basic needs of the population. It is critical to ensure that it is well resourced in light of the times to come.

Ensuring the right to adequate housing for all, and inclusive housing systems are key for disaster preparedness and beyond. If we are able to guarantee the right to housing to people in the midst of the pandemic, we cannot afford to go back to business-as-usual after the crisis.

The aftermath, the new normal, needs to tackle inequalities, by protecting common goods and basic needs such as housing, water, and energy, and ensuring that they are free of speculation so all citizens can have equal access to them. Science can prove to be an essential tool to ensuring basic needs to all, and it will be essential to foster the relationship between science and the common goods to leave no-one behind.

Ensuring access to internet for all as a basic service, as a tool to access not only information, but other essential services such as education, in order to leave no one behind.

2.   Financial Support Packages

Adopting financial support mechanisms that allow local and regional governments to continue to work at the frontline for the communities during the crisis and in the post-COVID-19 recovery phase.

Developing stimulus measures at national level that will ensure the consistency and sustainability of essential services as the income of local and regional government decreases.

An International Municipal/Territorial Relieve Fund can unlock access to funds for both emergency and reconstruction.

3.   Proximity models of global consumption and production

Proximity production models will need to be fostered, and should consider the informal sector, small and micro enterprises and start-ups, allowing us to harness inclusive innovation.

The pandemic has shed a light on the consumption model of many cities with an over-re-

liance on tourism and unsustainable delocalized systems of production, and it will be essential to rebalance the relationship between economic growth, environment and public priorities.

Re-evaluate the relationship between technology, inclusiveness and economic growth, developing alternative technology that is accessible to all. Technology and digital rights can and must go hand in hand.

A territorial approach to food systems should guarantee not only security but also greater sustainability models in which many small producers and small processors, respectful of the environment, would restore life to our territories and encourage job creation and local development.

4.   A worldwide green deal

It is essential to ensure that the measures that need to be taken to address climate change carry on in the post COVID-19 world. We need to ensure that measures to re-invigorate the economy do not undermine legitimate environmental concerns.

The response to COVID-19 needs to include a worldwide green deal that makes our communities more resilient to future outbreaks, and this means returning to full economic activity through sustainable models.

Fostering telework at a larger scale can enable us to cut down on emissions, contribute to more sustainable mobility models, and reconcile work and personal life.

5.   New citizenship and freedoms for renewed democracy

There is no false dichotomy between security and health, or privacy and civil liberties. Human and civil rights need to continue being the cornerstones of our societies worldwide. Strong local democracy can be the custodian of those values.

Governments at all levels will need to ensure that data gathering and the development of artificial intelligence is used for the common good and that rights are guaranteed with involvement of communities and at the service of democratic societies. It is technologically possible and it should be our framework once the crisis is over.

It is essential to ensure that the recovery is done with the more vulnerable populations

in mind, and not against them, by tackling false narratives and guaranteeing a rights-based approach to the aftermath of the pandemic.

6.   Generation Equality

The time has come to place an equality framework in urban planning, in legislation and development. Time has come to ensure full inclusion, full participation of women and girls in politics and the social fabric of cities and regions.

Nearly one in five women worldwide has experienced violence in the past year. The pandemic has exacerbated this reality for many women, and it is critical to put in place gender-violence responses to protect women worldwide and ensure their access to basic services.

Social safety nets must be expanded to ensure special protection to particular groups with special needs like boys and girls, the elderly and people with disabilities.

7.   Territories that care for their public providers

The crisis has highlighted the importance of protecting public servants. It is up to local and regional governments to take care of those who work day-to-day to provide basic services to our communities, to value their contributions to society, to ensure decent work and to foster a model of production that is people-centred and that puts service provision, and providers, at the forefront.

It is further imperative to acknowledge the jobs, mostly done by women in the care sector, often underpaid or even unpaid. Their care is not only an indispensable safety net but also a critical contribution to our economies.

8.   Culture as an antidote for the secondary effects

The cultural actors and sectors haves responded and offered critical inspiring contents that are helping us through the crisis. People have turned to culture to create meaning, to show solidarity and to boost general morale. There cannot be a better illustration of why culture needs to consolidate as the fourth pillar of sustainable development. In the aftermath, it is essential to carry out a conversation on how communities interact with, and access, culture.

The full cultural sector will need special attention as its financial sustainability is in jeopardy.

Addressing inequalities with be more important than ever, by developing programmes on heritage, creativity and diversity, available to all (that is, implementing cultural rights at a local level) as will nourishing the broad conversations on the values that bring humanity together.

9.   An interurban system

An international system built on the force of cities, local and regional governments that learn and define policies together supported by strong associations that will allow scaling up of actions. This system will put sharing and local democracy at the core, defining solidarity and resource capacity as the backbone of humanity.

10.   Next Generation Multilateralism

A global plan is needed. International measures that are vast, inclusive, and effective to reach all territories can only be achieved by solid international and regional governance, and will require systems to be strengthened in order to face the challenges to come.

In view of future pandemics, we need a strong World Health Organization with a multistakeholder governance structure with the capacity to facilitate procurement of medical supplies, testing kits, and Personal Protective Equipment.

Subsidiarity is necessary for the success of actions at all levels. Dialogue amongst all spheres of government and an effective decentralization must be carried out to ensure that the wants and needs of citizens are present within all governance mechanisms and that they reflect reality on the ground.

Bringing all stakeholders together is essential to carry out a holistic approach to the emergencies that we are facing, and will face, and said approaches must not adversely affect individual and collective rights, the backbones of democracies.

More than ever, international cooperation is proving to be essential to respond to the current pandemic, but will prove to be even more essential in the aftermath. It will be critical to guarantee exchanges of knowledge and experiences, through decentralized cooperation to build back better, stronger, and more inclusive after the pandemic. Local and regional governments must be the guardians of this international solidarity.

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