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Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions – Towards a Global Green Deal: harmonising global frameworks for climate change, biodiversity and sustainable development

(own-initiative opinion)

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Co-rapporteurs: Rafał TRZASKOWSKI (PL/EPP), Mayor of Warsaw, Poland

Kata TÜTTŐ (HU/PES), Deputy Mayor of Budapest, Hungary

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

THE EUROPEAN COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS (CoR),

A multilevel and holistic approach to address the intertwined planetary crises

1. underlines that the objectives of the Rio Conventions, as well as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development with its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the future international plastics treaty and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, are substantially interconnected and should be tackled in synergy to optimise the co-benefits; in this regard, draws attention to the UNFCCC COP28 Joint Statement on Climate, Nature and People ⁽¹⁾, which aims to foster stronger synergies, integration and alignment in the planning and implementation of national climate, biodiversity and land restoration plans and strategies;

2. is concerned by the fact that the world is not on track to achieve the SDGs ⁽²⁾, that it risks overshooting the 1,5 °C objective of the Paris Agreement ⁽³⁾ and that nature is declining globally at rates unprecedented in human history ⁽⁴⁾. Therefore, urgent, accelerated, responsible and multilevel action is needed to keep the world within the planetary boundaries and on track for reducing pollution, achieving the biodiversity targets, land degradation neutrality, climate objectives and SDGs, in a socially and economically just manner;

3. stresses that local and regional authorities (LRAs) play a pivotal role in designing, implementing, financing and monitoring integrated and comprehensive solutions to the intertwined planetary crisis, as demonstrated by the cities and regions that are part of the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities constituency (LGMA), the Advisory Committee of Subnational Governments and Biodiversity (AC SNG), and networks like the Global and European Covenant of Mayors, ICLEI, Under2 Coalition, Regions4, C40 Cities and Climate Alliance; at the same time, points to the need for a joined-up, inclusive approach that goes beyond multilevel governance alone and includes multisectoral governance, with the active involvement of a wide range of players, including local and regional authorities, civil society organisations, industrial sectors, academic institutions and other professionals;

4. reiterates the crucial role of cities and regions in achieving global targets for tackling biodiversity loss, climate change, pollution, land degradation and sustainable development, and their pivotal role in making United Nations (UN) decisions and recommendations more accessible to citizens. Their active involvement is essential for driving societal change and ensuring that local communities - and especially women, children, youth, vulnerable and marginalised groups - are fully informed and meaningfully engaged across all institutional levels, as per the Leaving No One Behind principle. Subnational governments can facilitate a gender-sensitive and responsive approach which effectively address the diverse needs of all citizens; especially the most vulnerable; they can also step-up environmental education and efforts to raise awareness of climate change, by increasing the involvement of schools, educational institutions and the media in disseminating accurate and relevant information on the climate and environmental challenges and the measures needed to tackle them;

⁽¹⁾ COP28 Joint Statement on Climate, Nature and People.

⁽²⁾ UN (2023): The Sustainable Development Goals Report and Report of the UN Secretary-General – Progress towards the SDGs: Towards a Rescue Plan for People and Planet, and UN DESA/UN Women Progress on the Sustainable Development Goals: The gender snapshot 2023.

⁽³⁾ IPCC (2023): Summary for Policymakers. In: Climate Change 2023: Synthesis Report.

⁽⁴⁾ IPBES (2019): Summary for policymakers of the global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services.

5. emphasises that mechanisms for including subnational governments in UN framework agreements should become more consistent, homogeneous and transparent in order to ensure that subnational governments and local communities feel further engaged in UN processes and can bring UN activities closer to citizens;

6. welcomes the comprehensive nature of the European Green Deal, which brings an interconnected policy approach to the EU, enabling it to also implement international biodiversity, climate, pollution, environmental and sustainable development commitments; however, highlights the urgent need to link the European Green Deal objectives and reporting mechanisms with the SDGs, the Rio Conventions and the Sendai Framework, especially with a view to increasing implementation capacities to reach the set targets; calls for enhanced policy coherence across all EU policies to ensure they contribute to reaching UN global commitments and avoid negative impacts on third countries' ability to achieve them; stresses that a sound, long-term and multilevel governance should be ensured for the European Green Deal, in order to improve its implementation, transparency and place-based approach;

7. recalls the recognition by the UN General Assembly and the UN Human Rights Council of the universal right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and welcomes the initiative of drafting a Global Pact for the Environment ⁽⁵⁾; calls for the development of an overarching and global strategy to address the triple planetary crises in a comprehensive, multilevel and inclusive manner, by promoting the integration of goals and objectives derived from the Rio Conventions, the SDGs, the Sendai Framework, the plastics treaty and creating a framework to speed up the green transition and live in harmony with nature through a Global Green Deal;

8. notes that cities and regions have taken up the integrated European Green Deal approach through a number of initiatives, including Sustainable Energy and Climate Action Plans (SECAPs) as part of European Covenant of Mayors, Local Green Deals as part of the EU Intelligent Cities Challenge, and Climate City Contracts as part of the EU Mission on Climate-Neutral and Smart Cities and Urban Nature Plans as a mean to implement the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. The European Committee of the Regions (CoR) points out that such initiatives and networks ensure that the European Green Deal is translated at local and regional level and emphasises that they are key tools for implementing the SDGs, the Rio Conventions and the Sendai Framework;

9. considers the EU to lead by example at global level in terms of multilevel action for sustainable development, climate and biodiversity, thanks to the existence of a dedicated institution – the CoR – and initiatives targeting local and regional authorities under the European Green Deal; nevertheless, highlights the need to further enhance this framework strategy by ensuring multilevel governance and direct finance for local and regional levels, and points to recommendations from the European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change report ⁽⁶⁾ on *Towards EU climate neutrality: progress, policy gaps and opportunities* to improve policy consistency;

10. believes that a strengthened European Green Deal that is better aligned with the objectives, financing, reporting timelines and requirements of the Rio Conventions and the SDGs and that provides improved multilevel governance structures could be an inspiration for this comprehensive approach at international level; considers that a Global Green Deal should reconcile sustainability with fair job-creation in line with local and regional needs;

11. recommends that the European Commission assesses how EU Member States are designing multilevel governance structures and sharing methods and monitoring systems in their sustainability, climate and biodiversity strategies; suggests communicating best practices across EU Member States to promote policy coherence and multilevel governance among them, and urges the European Commission to take these best practices into account in its review of the Regulation on the Governance of the Energy Union and Climate Action (Governance Regulation), so as to ensure that all stakeholders (civil society organisations, economic sectors, academia, etc.) are involved, at all levels, and not only the relevant institutions;

⁽⁵⁾ Draft Global Pact for the Environment.

⁽⁶⁾ European Scientific Advisory Board on Climate Change; *Towards EU climate neutrality: progress, policy gaps and opportunities*.

12. acknowledges that socio-economic disparities may be exacerbated by the climate crisis. In aligning national and global frameworks, it is crucial to address and adapt these frameworks to take into account such disparities, ensuring that vulnerable communities and regions are prioritised;

Ensuring that the Rio Conventions and UN processes recognise subnational governments as a crucial condition for achieving global goals

13. urges the EU and all UN member states to establish a structured, coordinated, systematic and harmonised approach for the inclusion, direct financing, monitoring, reporting and capacity building of subnational governments across the Rio Conventions and the 2030 Agenda in order to ensure and support implementation at local level; in this sense, welcomes the work being done by the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Group on Local and Regional Governments in proposing 'modalities and means to enhance institutional mechanisms to strengthen engagement of local and regional governments in intergovernmental processes' and stands ready to cooperate to further explore the different options on the table, with a view to creating a stable single-entry point for the permanent engagement of cities and regions;

14. commends the ongoing efforts of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in regard to the preparation of its Special Report on Climate Change and Cities (7);

15. highlights the Bern III Conference objective of identifying opportunities to promote a collaborative approach and to foster synergies among UN secretariats and parties implementing the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF); calls for a similar process to be developed among the Rio Conventions and other multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), such as the continuation of the Joint Liaison Group (JLG) established between the secretariats of the CBD, UNFCCC and the UNCCD, with the aim of enhancing coordination between the conventions; calls on all the Parties engaged in the Bern III Conference, the EU and its Member States to recognise the important role played by subnational governments in making linkages between the biodiversity, climate and social agendas, which through their policy frameworks and actions, though territorial in scale, have a global impact;

16. calls on all Parties to the UN Rio conventions, and the EU and its Member States, to ensure synergies when developing strategies such as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Adaptation Plans, Long-Term Strategies, National Sustainable Development Strategies (NSDSs), National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), National Restoration Plans, Disaster Risk Reduction strategies, strategies and plans tackling Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets; urges them to ensure a form of multilevel governance that promotes such synergies, including at subnational, regional and local levels, and to ensure gender mainstreaming in the development of their plans by promoting a collaborative approach with the overarching goal of operating within our planetary boundaries;

17. stresses that, despite the comprehensive approach taken by subnational governments in implementing, localising, and monitoring SDGs and Rio Conventions, financing for subnational action remains limited, complicated and scattered as data shows that, between 2003 and 2016, less than 10 % of climate finance from global climate funds was spent on local action (8); highlights that financial support and funds coordinated by the EU should be easily accessible and directly targeted at local and regional authorities without excessive administrative burden; in this vein, believes that local and regional authorities should receive sufficient funds to implement the Green Deal projects, they should be involved in planning, designing and implementing those funds;

18. calls on the EU and all UN member states for an alignment of financing in order to achieve the climate and biodiversity goals and the SDGs, for less fragmentation and a reduced administrative burden across various funding programmes and among stakeholders, and for these funding programmes to be more responsive to the needs of LRAs, locally developed action and investment; urges national governments to evaluate and assess the administrative burden imposed, and propose that it be simplified and automated for the benefit of subregional governments. The CoR points out that providing direct access to funds from finance institutions such as the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the Adaptation Fund, loss and damage funds, and multilateral and bilateral development banks – without imposing excessive economic and administrative constraints – is essential to foster integrated and locally led solutions;

(7) Special Report on Climate Change and Cities.

(8) IIED Working Paper; Delivering real change: getting international climate finance to the local level.

19. recognises that the global population is increasingly urbanised, with a majority living in cities of various sizes, contributing significantly to the climate crisis due to the high concentrations of greenhouse gas emissions, energy consumption and waste production. This urbanisation trend underscores the critical role of cities, and particularly medium-sized and large cities, in driving sustainability and climate action; highlights the distinct challenges that smaller cities, towns and rural areas face in developing comprehensive biodiversity, land degradation, pollution, food systems resilience, climate and sustainable development action plans, building synergies and connections with metropolitan areas and accessing financing; points out that communities in remote and rural areas are disproportionately affected by climate change⁽⁹⁾ and emphasises the need to support these areas with specific funding lines – which are the areas that provide the most ecosystem services;

20. highlights the lack of data on cities in many regions of the world and underlines the need for stronger research and innovation funding that supports efforts to close data gaps collecting sex-disaggregated and intersectional data, statistics and information⁽¹⁰⁾, which are key for creating early warning systems and thus avoiding loss and damage, and by making resources available and increasing the capacity of local governments and their partners; in this regard, highlights the efforts made by the European Commission to incorporate and update the Social Progress Index at EU level, and calls for similar efforts to be made for the EU's main urban areas, given that they are home to the majority of the population;

21. emphasises that Biosphere Reserves, Ramsar Wetlands of International Importance, Unesco Global Geoparks, and natural World Heritage sites, are strong allies to meet national targets in EU Member States under global commitments;

22. considers that reporting is necessary for keeping track of global progress towards the goals, for supporting decision-making and for fine-tuning action; nevertheless, emphasises that current differences between the reporting frameworks and supporting mechanisms of the Rio Conventions and the SDGs are creating bottlenecks and red tape; therefore calls on the UN to work towards an integrated and interoperable monitoring framework for the connected UN conventions, building on existing monitoring frameworks such as those of the Global Covenant of Mayors CDP-ICLEI Track, CitiesWithNature and RegionsWithNature;

23. welcomes the Cities and Regions Summit and the UNEA-6 Ministerial Declaration, which commits to urgently addressing today's interconnected challenges through effective, co-sectoral, inclusive and sustainable actions based on science and with the engagement of all relevant actors and partners. The CoR highlights the importance of the UNEP/EA.6/L.7 resolution on promoting synergies, cooperation or collaboration for national implementation of MEAs and other relevant environmental instruments, as well as the UNEP/EA.6/L.9 resolution on fostering national action to address global environmental challenges through increased cooperation between UNEA, UNEP and other MEAs. The CoR also underlines the relevance of UNEA as a global convening body on environmental governance under the auspices of UNEP, and looks forward to cooperate and participate in future meetings and side events;

UNFCCC COP29, UN CBD COP16, UNCCD COP16 and the UN Summit of the Future as turning points in achieving harmonisation and multilevel governance

24. stresses that the Council conclusions on UNFCCC COP28 referred to local and regional governments as key partners in achieving the climate goals; draws attention to its conclusions on CBD COP15 underlining the importance of ensuring the full and effective participation of subnational governments in the GBF; calls on the Council to confirm these stances in its conclusions on UNFCCC COP29 and CBD COP16;

25. welcomes the fact that UNFCCC COP28 recognised the importance of multilevel action and the role of subnational governments with the launch of the Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnerships⁽¹¹⁾(CHAMP) and the organisation of the Local Climate Action Summit⁽¹²⁾ (LCAS). The CoR calls on the COP29 Presidency to build on CHAMP and ensure the structured involvement of the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) Constituency in the negotiations and to support the organisation of the third Ministerial Meeting on Urbanisation and Climate Change. The CoR invites the COP29 Presidency and future presidencies to continue supporting CHAMP and organising LCAS in future editions of the conference, as well as to continue the discussions on synergies for climate, nature and people, building on the COP28 Joint Statement;

⁽⁹⁾ UN Women explainer: How gender inequality and climate change are interconnected.

⁽¹⁰⁾ Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions – Gender equality and climate change: towards mainstreaming the gender perspective in the European Green Deal (OJ C 270, 13.7.2022, p. 25).

⁽¹¹⁾ <https://www.cop28.com/en/cop28-uae-coalition-for-high-ambition-multilevel-partnerships-for-climate-action>.

⁽¹²⁾ <https://www.cop28.com/en/lcas>.

26. welcomes the 15 % increase in urban content between the first and second set of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) (2016 and 2021) and stresses that 132 out of 157 NDCs assessed by UN-Habitat have content on urban areas. The CoR points out that the latest report ⁽¹³⁾ acknowledges that cities across the globe have great potential to drive the transition but that many of the national submissions and contributions do not recognise this role;

27. stresses, however, that only one third of CHAMP-supporting countries have strong urban content in their NDCs, with low- and middle-income economies leading the way. Recognising the historical responsibility of the Global North for emissions and the ensuing climate crisis, the CoR urges all EU Member States and the European Commission to officially endorse CHAMP and implement it in the EU by implementing the Fit for 55 package and revising the Governance Regulation, which should actively involve cities and regions in shaping National Energy and Climate Plans (NEPCs), among other legislation. The CoR also emphasises that setting a science-based 2040 climate target through ensuring multilevel governance should be the basis of the EU's revised NDC, which should be submitted well before UNFCCC COP30. The EU 2040 climate target should take into consideration local and regional socio-economic circumstances, the principle of subsidiarity, and ensure support for all sectors – especially agriculture and industry – in order to foster Europe's transition, sustainability and competitiveness. The CoR stresses the urgency for a legislative alignment with the Paris Agreement, the Global Biodiversity Framework and the Agenda 2030. As part of the much-needed just energy transition, calls on the EU to phase-out all fossil fuels, without placing disproportionately high costs on fossil-fuel-reliant cities and regions ⁽¹⁴⁾, and ramp up European investment in green technology, renewable energy sources and energy efficiency to reach climate neutrality by 2050, without undermining the EU's competitiveness and strategic autonomy;

28. considers the 'Roadmap to Mission 1,5 °C' and the establishment of 'the COP Presidencies Troika ⁽¹⁵⁾' a key opportunity to establish a 2-year work programme; urges the UNFCCC COP Presidencies Troika to work together with subnational governments to implement the CHAMP initiative and strengthen the urban component of NDCs to keep the 1,5 °C Paris objective attainable;

29. urges the UNFCCC Parties to ensure a multilevel planning and governance approach in drafting their commitments – starting from the revision of the NDCs planned by UNFCCC COP30 – by including subnational climate commitments, actions and achievements in NDCs, Long-Term Strategies and National Adaptation Plans and by taking into account the distribution of powers in their implementation; urges Member States to take into account regions' context and specificities and make use of their prerogative to determine its energy mix in line with the principle of technological neutrality;

30. urges the UNFCCC COP29 Presidency to engage with subnational governments throughout the dialogue on implementing the outcomes of the Global Stocktake (GST) in 2024-2028, starting at CMA6. The CoR underlines the importance of local stocktake/town hall COP debates and the importance of including outcomes from such local dialogues in the annual global stocktake dialogue starting at SB60 (June 2024) to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and good practices at local level on how the outcomes of the GST are feeding into the preparation of NDCs;

31. urges the UNFCCC and the Parties to agree on an ambitious new collective quantified goal on climate finance (NCQG) from a floor of USD 100 billion per year, emphasising the critical need for direct financing to subnational governments as well as international climate finance for mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage, particularly in the Global South; recognises the significant historical contributions of European countries to global emissions and, consequently, their responsibility in exacerbating the climate crisis in vulnerable regions. In this context, the EU must honour its obligations under the Paris Agreement by providing its fair share of international climate finance, including making substantive multi-year pledges to the new Loss and Damage Fund. The CoR points out that cities and regions need a more integrated programme approach to financing which should also increase synergies between mitigation, adaptation, nature-based solutions, biodiversity protection and restoration, as well as the SDGs, thereby ensuring that no one is left behind in the global fight against climate change;

⁽¹³⁾ UN-Habitat (2024); Local Action for Global Goals: An Opportunity for Enhancing Nationally Determined Contributions.

⁽¹⁴⁾ Opinion of the European Committee of the Regions — UNFCCC COP28: the role of subnational authorities in keeping climate ambition on track (Own-initiative opinion) (OJ C, C/2023/1323, 22.12.2023, ELI: <http://data.europa.eu/eli/C/2023/1323/oj>).

⁽¹⁵⁾ COP28 launches "The COP Presidencies Troika" in partnership with the COP29 and COP30 Presidencies.

32. urges the EU to foster Green Deal Partnerships with global stakeholders, driving a Global Green Deal with investments, technology access and expertise sharing; highlights the necessity for the EU to lead in technological innovation and economic models for decarbonisation, particularly through facilitating technology exchange with the Global South, while also rebalancing the global system of intellectual property rights to ensure the Global South can access key technologies, including for health and decarbonisation; advocates for leveraging initiatives like the Global Gateway and Just Energy Transition Partnerships as key vehicles for green, resilient development, aiming to match the scale of investment in the global green transition to the EU's own green transition efforts;

33. emphasises the necessity for the EU to lead in the alleviation of global inequalities, climate and environmental injustices linked to its resource demands whether that be in their extraction or processing and calls for prioritising the health of local communities, indigenous peoples, nature and biodiversity throughout these processes;

34. recalls how circular economy, waste prevention and sustainable waste management are essential to prevent exacerbating global inequalities and environmental injustices, and points out the alarming EU exports of waste to non-EU countries amounting to 32,1 million tonnes in 2022; welcomes the recent provisional political agreement reached by the co-legislators to update the regulation on shipments of waste; urges to further strengthen and expand the ban for Member States to export waste for disposal or recovery as it pertains to plastic, and other hazardous or non-hazardous materials with the aim of following an end-of-waste approach in third countries and non-OECD countries;

35. welcomes the successful cooperation with the European Commission and co-legislators at UNFCCC COP28 and reaffirms its commitment to strengthening synergies and promoting the engagement of EU local and regional governments in UNFCCC processes; calls on the next European Commission to continue such cooperation and on the Belgian and Hungarian Presidencies to recognise in the Council Conclusions on the preparations for COP29 the leadership of EU cities and regions in accelerating and broadening climate mitigation and adaptation action;

36. points to Decision 15/12 from UN CBD COP15 on engagement with subnational governments, cities and other local governments to enhance implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF); highlights Decision 15/6, which requests that the Parties revise and update their NBSAPs and align them with the GBF and its goals and targets by COP16; stresses that all levels of government are responsible for implementing the GBF, and calls for the proposed whole-of-government approach to be built on;

37. emphasises the importance of CBD COP16 for addressing the interconnectedness of biodiversity loss, climate change and the SDGs, especially through ecosystem-based and nature-based solutions to increase resilience and to reduce biodiversity loss; reiterates the role that subnational governments can play in providing comprehensive and coherent solutions to address these intertwined challenges;

38. highlights the impact of the climate crisis on global food security, underscoring the need for a sustainable, resilient food system to support the right to healthy food and adequate nutrition under a fair Global Green Deal; urges the EU to adopt agroecological practices and align its food and trade policies with global food sovereignty and climate- and environmentally-friendly agriculture; emphasises that exports from the EU must not dismantle local markets and production structures in countries worldwide;

39. highlights the role of cities and regions, as recognised in EU legislation, such as the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 to protect and restore biodiversity, with its Urban Nature Plans initiative, the Green City Accord and EU Missions; takes note of the final adoption of the EU Nature Restoration Law, and emphasises the need to implement it so that there is no net loss in urban green spaces; reiterates the need to enhance technical expertise and capacity for local and regional authorities in designing, executing and monitoring actions to achieve this target;

40. welcomes voluntary initiatives of cities and regions to drive ambitious biodiversity action to bridge the gap in multilevel governance and monitoring, such as the soon-to-be-implemented Berlin Urban Nature Pact;

41. calls on the EU to establish a monitoring and reporting framework that is integrated with all levels of government and that provides cities with low-effort mechanisms to easily feed into the EU's Member State reporting structure for the CBD. The CoR acknowledges CitiesWithNature and RegionsWithNature as established platforms endorsed by the CBD for such streamlined reporting;

42. reiterates that there are significant gaps in the EU in terms of multilevel governance, planning, implementation and financing in regard to the integration of local biodiversity action, monitoring and reporting with NBSAPs; urges the Council to commit to ensuring multilevel governance to fully implement the GBF by respecting the subsidiarity principles while ensuring that local and regional governments' views and contributions are included in commitments, contributions and reports at national, EU and international level;

43. stresses the importance of developing more robust and transparent mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating progress in tackling climate change so that the effectiveness of the policies and measures adopted can be accurately assessed, thus making it easier to determine in good time where action needs to be taken. Moreover, the emphasis should be on encouraging the creation of more accessible and understandable monitoring tools with a view to the involvement of citizens and stakeholders, thereby fostering greater transparency and ownership in climate decision-making;

44. calls on the EU to provide financial support, resources and guidance to local and regional governments and develop their capacity so that they can devise the call by the EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030 and implement Urban Nature Plans as strategic frameworks for implementing ambitious biodiversity action, and so that they can design specific climate change adaptation strategies at local and regional level that give careful consideration to the specific needs, resources and vulnerabilities of each individual area and region, thus ensuring that the measures are more effective and that the areas are more resilient;

45. urges the European Parliament to monitor the involvement of local and regional authorities and requests monitoring reports from the Commission regarding the implementation of GBF Decision 15/12, specifically regarding the involvement of local and regional authorities in the design, implementation and financing of the EU Biodiversity Strategy, the Nature Restoration Law and NBSAPs – not at least by means of Urban Nature Plans;

46. points to Decision 5 from UNCCD COP15 on participation and engagement with local governments and parliamentarians for the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD); welcomes Decision 8 which invites parties to explore complementarities in the implementation of LDN targets, NDCs, NBSAPs, as well as national targets under the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and related planning, programming, reporting and monitoring in order to achieve the UNCCD's objectives; calls for strengthening harmonised efforts between land degradation neutrality, disaster risk, biodiversity and climate change related targets at local and regional level;

47. calls on the 2024 UN Summit of the Future to consider UNEA-6 resolutions, especially UNEP/EA.6/L.7, build on it further to ensure synergies and give subnational authorities a prominent role in implementing the Rio conventions, MEAs, Sendai Framework, plastic treaty and SDGs in a way that is comprehensive and that utilises synergies;

48. welcomes the zero revised draft of the Pact for the Future⁽¹⁶⁾ and the commitment to transforming global UN governance, reforming the governance of international financial architecture and strengthening the UN and its Economic and Social Council (Ecosoc), as well as the commitment to strengthen the engagement of subnational governments in UN intergovernmental bodies and Parties' request to the Secretary-General to provide recommendations on this latest matter. The CoR calls on the Parties and the UN to ensure that the text on the engagement of subnational governments in UN intergovernmental bodies is reflected in the final outcome of the Pact for the Future so that subnational governments could play their role as key actors at the crossroads of the SDGs and implementation of the Rio Conventions. Meaningful and impactful participation for subnational authorities in UN processes should be guaranteed through the establishment of a permanent body;

49. supports the Pact's draft Declaration on Future Generations⁽¹⁷⁾ in calling for a global governance process that does not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs, in consciously avoiding foreseeable harm; supports the call for encouraging state administrations to establish youth consultative bodies with a mandate and resources to formally involve the younger generations as active decision makers for their future, and encourages regional and local administrations to explore similar pathways;

⁽¹⁶⁾ Dated 14.5.2024: <https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/sotf-pact-for-the-future-rev.1.pdf>.

⁽¹⁷⁾ UN Declaration on future generations.

50. calls on the EU and all UN member states to include the need to align the biodiversity, climate, pollution, desertification and SDG action plans and financing and capacity-building support mechanisms in future versions of the Pact for the Future to create synergies and better identify trade-offs. The CoR also urges them to include a commitment to involve subnational governments in national biodiversity, climate and SDG planning, financing and monitoring processes;

51. emphasises the importance of reforming international partnerships, development banks and disadvantageous clauses in trade agreements in line with the EU interests and values focusing on the SDGs and to strengthen human rights protection. The Paris Agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, the Sustainable Development Goals, and the ILO core conventions, the precautionary principle and measures to phase-out fossil fuels and other environmentally harmful subsidies should be essential elements in the EU free trade agreements, thereby making trade a part of the efforts to limit emissions, switch to net-zero technologies and end environmental degradation;

52. recommends that the UN secretary-general contribute to Member States' deliberations in the lead-up to the Summit of the Future so that they can advise on a UN global strategy for the engagement of local and regional governments, including institutional mechanisms, intergovernmental processes and partnership arrangements, enabling LRAs to contribute more to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the New Urban Agenda.

Brussels, 19 June 2024.

The President
of the European Committee of the Regions
Vasco ALVES CORDEIRO
