

**CONFERENCE ON ACCESS TO DEVELOPMENT FUNDING FOR LOCAL  
GOVERNMENT IN AFRICA, JOHANNESBURG, 15-17 SEPTEMBER 2008**

**DECLARATION ON LOCAL GOVERNMENT, DEVELOPMENT FUNDING AND  
AID EFFECTIVENESS**

1. The successful Conference organised by the Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF) and Developing Markets Associates (DMA) in association with United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLGA), South African Local Government Association (SALGA) and Department for Provincial and Local Government, Government of South Africa (DPLG), attended by some 300 participants from Botswana, Cameroon, Ghana, Ivory Coast, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritius, Mozambique, Namibia, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Swaziland, Tanzania, The Gambia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, as well as the Commonwealth Secretariat, UNDESA, UNCDF, UN Habitat, the European Commission, DFID, GTZ, USAID and other international development agencies, local government partner organisations and the private sector and co-chaired by CLGF/ UCLGA/ SALGA/ DPLG with vice chairs from the Cameroon, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia;

**Role of Local Government in Development**

2. AWARE of the vital and growing role of local government in African's development and that adequate and equitable resource allocation to local government is one of the key components of the *Commonwealth Principles on Good Practice for Local Democracy and Good Governance (the Aberdeen Agenda)*, formally endorsed by Commonwealth Heads of Government in 2005 as part of the Commonwealth's fundamental political values and again re-affirmed by them in 2007;
3. RECALLS the policy positions of CLGF, notably from the CLGF meetings held in Aberdeen, 2005, Auckland 2007, Vancouver 2008 especially the 2006 Kampala symposium on local democracy, good governance and delivering the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) as well as the detailed policy CLGF papers on municipal credit rating, financing decentralisation and municipal infrastructure financing and its partnership work with the Commonwealth Secretariat in these areas;
4. CONSCIOUS of the particular urgency of providing aid in emergency situations, for African states undergoing major political, economic and social transformation and those countries re-emerging into democracy and recognising local government's role in facilitating the process of post-conflict reconciliation and peace-building in countries such as Zimbabwe, especially through community-based initiatives/projects;
5. CONCERNED that local government is often not included in national development strategies such as Poverty Reduction Strategy papers (PRSPs), Sector-Wide Approaches (SWAPs) and that the current greater emphasis on General Budget Support (GBS), as opposed to the previously available programme/project-based support, can counteract decentralisation, local access to development funds and local accountability in the absence of specific instruments designed to ensure that such aid is channelled to support local development;

**Engaging Local Government as a Development Partner**

6. WELCOMES the increased recognition given by the African Union, the Commonwealth, the United Nations and international development partners to democratic local government as an agent of development and to its vital role in combating poverty,

managing urbanisation, the delivery of the MDGs, tackling climate change, and provision of critical services to local communities including to the poor and disadvantaged;

7. COMMENDS the efforts of international development partners in the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action to enhance aid effectiveness and the delivery and management of aid through strengthening country ownership over development, building more effective and inclusive partnerships for development and delivering and accounting for development results, particularly the explicit reference made to partnership with local government and calls on development partners to ensure that mechanisms exist to allow local governments to access funds directly ;
8. WELCOMES further the opening up of international development funds to local government and ministries of local government to support national decentralisation policies, infrastructure and service delivery and local government capacity-building, including through the allocation of specialised donor budget lines and innovations such as those of UNCDF, UNDP and other development partners;
9. RECOGNISES, however, that even where local government has been formally accepted as a development partner, there can be unduly bureaucratic, lengthy and resource-heavy procedures, and other political and practical barriers often remain which prevent local governments from accessing development funds effectively and that in such cases local government need to raise these issues with development partners and national governments;

#### **Strengthening Local Government Capacity**

10. WELCOMES the Accra Agenda for Action agreement to broaden country-level policy dialogue on development and especially the commitment that *'donors will support efforts to increase the capacity of ...local governments...to take an active role in dialogue on development policy and on the role of aid in contributing countries' development objectives'* in recognition that in many cases local governments and their national associations require specialised technical expertise and greater capacity in order to engage in a meaningful way with the complex procedures involved in securing development funds for their work; and expresses the hope that the Accra commitments will be implemented in full;
11. ENCOURAGES central governments to also commit resources to the capacity building of local government to help achieve national development targets;
12. CALLS on international development partners to strengthen the capacity of national local government associations in Africa to enable them to engage effectively with development partners in national policy dialogue, planning and access to funds and likewise at regional level the capacity of UCLGA and the African Ministerial Conference on Decentralisation, AMCOD;
13. CALLS further on international development partners to assist strengthening of capacity by supporting sharing of experience through north-south and south-south local government international partnerships, for example under the CLGF Good Practice Scheme, for monitoring the application of the 2005 *Aberdeen Agenda* in African countries and for promoting other innovative programmes such as international local government peer reviews as developed by CLGF in Southern Africa;
14. STRONGLY ENDORSES the commitment made in the Accra Agenda for Action that developing country governments will *'work more closely with ...local authorities...in preparing, implementing and monitoring national development policies and plans'* as

well as to *'identify areas where there is a need to strengthen the capacity to perform and deliver services at all levels- national, sub-national, sectoral and thematic- and design strategies to address them'*, given the crucial importance of ensuring good channels of communication between national/provincial-state and local government and the donor community, facilitated by ministries of local government working in partnership with national associations of local government;

15. HOPES that the commitment to work with local governments at country as well as international level, will also be extended to an ongoing policy dialogue with democratically constituted international local government organisations such as CLGF;
16. RECOGNISES also the key role of the private sector and civil society as development partners which can assist the strengthening of local government capacity, through providing credit ratings, as a source of private investment capital, for infrastructure funding, settlement upgrading, and local service delivery;
17. COMMITTS to the implementation of UN and Commonwealth targets to ensure gender-sensitive local government and promote the role of women in local government;

### **Pan-African and International Action**

18. EXPRESSES the hope that the African Union, NEPAD, ECOWAS, EAC, SADC and other regional structures in Africa strengthen their interaction and policy dialogue with responsible African institutions such as UCLGA, and AMCOD and concerned local government partners such as CLGF with a view to giving effect to the principles contained in this Declaration;
19. CALLS on CLGF and UCLGA to bring the policy recommendations contained in this Declaration, and in particular ways of taking forward the Accra Agenda proposal relating to local government, to the attention of their membership and to ensure that they are given further consideration by UCLG, especially its Capacity Building Platform, and by the CLGF Conference on *'Improving Local Government: The Commonwealth Vision'*, Freeport, Grand Bahama, May 2009;
20. ENCOURAGES local governments, through their national associations of local government to proactively engage in dialogue and planning for the programming of support with central government, development partners and other stakeholders and explore mechanisms for local government, with support from their national governments, to access funds directly from development partners;
21. REQUESTS CLGF to ensure that the above recommendations are submitted for endorsement at forthcoming meetings of Commonwealth Finance Ministers and Heads of Government;
22. FURTHER REQUESTS CLGF to give consideration to practical ways in which the Conference recommendations can be taken forward, for example by developing a guide/toolkit on the issue of accessing development funds and by undertaking more specialised policy events with specific international development partners;

### **Appreciation**

23. EXPRESSES warm appreciation to UCLGA, SALGA, the Government of South Africa/DPLG, Development Bank of Southern Africa, DBSA, Microsoft Corporation and all contributors for their generous support for the Conference.