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Local & Regional
Europe

Climate change negotiations

Questions & answers to understand *what* is at stake and *how* we are responding

Council of European Municipalities and Regions
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CLIMATE CHANGE NEGOTIATIONS

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What is climate change?

Climate change is a large-scale, long-term shift in the planet's weather patterns or average temperatures. It can occur **naturally**, and in fact the Earth has known natural changes many times in its 4.5 billion years. However it can also be caused by **human activity**, and there is a large consensus among the world's leading climate scientists that this is what is causing climate change *today*.

In particular, it is the increase of **greenhouse gases** – which regulate the distribution of energy in the atmosphere – that is pointed out as main cause of climate change; and especially those greenhouse gases that result from the burning of fossil fuels (oil, gas, coal) and from deforestation.

Climate change has many **different faces**: higher temperatures (global warming), changing rainfall and rising sea levels, declining sea ice and shrinking glaciers, etc. All of these create pressure on the world's population and economy, and justify the imperative to fight climate change. This is particularly true for local and regional governments who are the first to experience the impact of climate change (heat waves, floods, air pollution, etc.).

What have *national* governments done so far and what is the next step?

In 1992, countries signed an international treaty, the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change** (UNFCCC), defining what they could do to limit greenhouse gases and rising global temperatures in the atmosphere, which are causing climate change today.

By 1995, countries realised that what the Convention said was not sufficient and adequate. They launched negotiations to strengthen the global response to climate change, and two years later, adopted the **Kyoto Protocol**.

The Kyoto Protocol is a global legally binding instrument – and the only one so far – that sets specific targets for developed countries to reduce the emissions of 6 greenhouse gases by an average of 5% below their 1990 levels.

There are now 195 countries Parties to the Convention and 192 to the Kyoto Protocol. Parties meet every year in a so-called “Conference of Parties” (COP) to review the progress they have made. A Summit takes place, usually every 4 to 5 years, for a broader review of their action and targets. Countries that are non-parties can attend meetings as observers.

The reductions set in the Kyoto Protocol were to be achieved over a first **commitment period running from 2008 to 2012**. In 2007, countries started to discuss a **second period of commitment**. In 2012, in Doha, the EU and some additional countries agreed on a period running from **2013 to 2020**.

Those commitments are, however, only directed to a reduced number of developed countries, and are therefore not truly universal in scope and nature. In fact, those countries that accepted to reduce their emissions only account for 15% of the total emissions in the world. At the same time, it is expected that by 2020, almost 2/3 of global emissions will come from emerging and developing countries.

The next major **Summit on Climate Change** is due to take place in **Paris in 2015**. The challenge will be to come up with a new legally binding agreement that integrates commitments of both developed and emerging/developing countries, and that can be implemented from 2020. Already united under one global umbrella organisation, local and regional governments can help reach both ends meet.

The process of negotiations that should lead to this agreement in 2015 is known as the “**ADP process**” and should ultimately aim at making sure global temperature increase stays below 2 degrees Celsius compared to the temperature in pre-industrial times; a decision that Parties took in 2010.

What is at stake for *local and regional* governments and what is our response?

Local and regional governments are home for over 50% of the world's population and are responsible for over 75% of global energy consumption. As level of government closest to the citizens, we have the **competence** – in our roles as planners, consumers, services providers and motivators – to act as a model and encourage other stakeholders on how to take action.

More concretely, we can help reduce greenhouse gas emissions (*mitigation*), for instance by having public transport run on renewable energy, and adapt ourselves to the negative consequences of climate change (*adaptation*), for instance by adapting building codes to extreme weather events.

Unfortunately neither the UNFCCC nor the Kyoto Protocol included any reference to local and regional governments, or to our role in fighting climate change. Against that background, and under the leadership of UCLG and ICLEI, a “**Local Government Climate Roadmap**” was adopted in 2007 to ensure recognition, engagement and empowerment of local and regional governments in the new global climate regime.

For a first period of 5 years, the Roadmap campaigned on those three bases: **recognise, engage, empower**. A first achievement came in 2010 with an explicit referencing to us in the so-called Cancun Agreements as governmental stakeholders. This could later be used to push for further decentralisation, and in particular for more resources and power to undertake action at local and regional level.

Under this Roadmap, different **global mechanisms** have also been developed to enhance measurable, reportable and verifiable local climate action (e.g. carbon Cities Climate Registry, etc.) in order to demonstrate and illustrate our contribution to the fight against global warming and climate change.

In **2013**, the Roadmap entered a second phase that will run until the 2015 Summit. The objective now is to secure greater collaboration with nations, and a financial framework to fund local climate action.

A “**Friends of Cities**” Group among national governments at the UNFCCC was established to this end. At this year's UN Conference on Climate, and for the first time in the history of climate negotiations, a “**Cities Day**” will also be organised. Both should enhance our dialogue with national governments and the UNFCCC Secretariat, and help raise awareness on our role and priorities.

All of our demands and commitments towards the 2015 Summit were defined in the **Nantes Declaration** of Mayors and Subnational Leaders on Climate Change, adopted in September 2013.

What happens *during the negotiations* and how do *local and regional* governments organise themselves?

As is the case for all UN negotiations, it is national governments that decide upon the direction to give to a new framework. That being said, negotiations are open to other stakeholders – business and industry, indigenous people, trade unions, etc. – which can attend meetings as “**observers**”.

Observers gather in specific interest groups known as “**constituencies**”. There are now 9 of them, each led by a “focal point” that facilitates the exchange of information with the UNFCCC Secretariat.

Local and regional governments are gathered around the “**Local Governments and Municipal Authorities**” (**LGMA**) constituency. It is one the first constituencies ever established, active since the first UN Conference on Climate in 1995. As of 2013, the constituency had 14 active members, including UCLG through which CEMR is represented. ICLEI is our constituency's focal point.

Overall there are many benefits in belonging to one of the constituencies: access to the plenary floor in the form of an intervention or to bilateral meetings with officials, allocation of secondary badges when access to a site is limited, receipt of informal advance information from the UNFCCC Secretariat, etc.

On the other hand, local and regional governments can sometimes be offered to **join national delegations**. This is another useful entry point to advocate for our positions.

How has the *European Union* responded so far?

While all EU Members States are *individual* parties of the UNFCCC and the Kyoto Protocol, so is the European Union itself as a “regional economic integration organisation”. However, it does not have a separate vote from its members, who usually meet in private to agree on common negotiating positions beforehand. The country that holds the EU Presidency then speaks for the European Union and its 28 Member States.

In terms of the commitments made, **under the Kyoto Protocol**, the 15 countries that were EU members before 2004 ('EU-15') agreed to reduce their *collective* emissions to 8% below 1990 levels by the years 2008-2012. First figures show that they went beyond that target and actually reached 12.2%. Countries that joined the EU since 2004 also have Kyoto reduction targets of 6% or 8% (5% in Croatia's case) and most are also on good track to meet these targets.

For 2020, the EU committed to cutting its emissions to 20% below 1990 levels. This commitment is one of the headline targets of the Europe 2020 strategy and is being implemented through a package of binding legislation. The EU has offered to increase its emissions reduction to 30% by 2020 if other major emitting countries in the developed and developing worlds agree on ambitious reduction efforts too.

For 2050, EU leaders endorsed the objective of reducing Europe's greenhouse gas emissions by 80-95% compared to 1990 levels. The European Commission has published a **roadmap** for building the low-carbon European economy that this will require. In particular, it is currently working on a specific package for the **2020-2030 period**.

By setting those ambitious targets, the EU is positioning itself as a **leader** on the fight against climate change. To achieve those targets, however, local and regional governments' contribution will be key. This will require further recognition, engagement and empowerment in the current EU discourse and practice, and proper lobbying on local and regional governments' side.

In particular, local and regional governments will need to **follow closely and regularly** the targets and legislation that the EU commits to, check whether they respect the principle of subsidiarity, and analyse their impact on local constituencies and the financial mechanisms available for us to implement these targets and legislation.

What are the links with *other international negotiations*?

Although environmental in nature, climate change has **consequences for all spheres of existence** on our planet – economic growth, migration, urban development, poverty, social inclusion, institutional and capacity-building, etc. For this reason, climate change negotiations are **closely linked with other global discussions** that are currently taking place, in particular for local and regional governments:

- The definition of “**sustainable development goals**” that will build on the Millennium Development Goals and jointly address poverty eradication and sustainable development challenges. These goals are to be agreed on in 2015, just a few months before the 2015 Paris Summit on Climate, and should include goals on climate change as well as on sustainable urbanisation.
- The adoption of a **new urban agenda**, to be approved at the UN Habitat III Conference in 2016 and that will set our vision of towns, cities and regions for the next 20 years. Territories that are sustainable and resilient to climate change should be part of this agenda.

Complementarities between these processes will be sought when defining our own agenda and messages (See Annex. Four converging processes for local and regional governments).

What about CEMR?

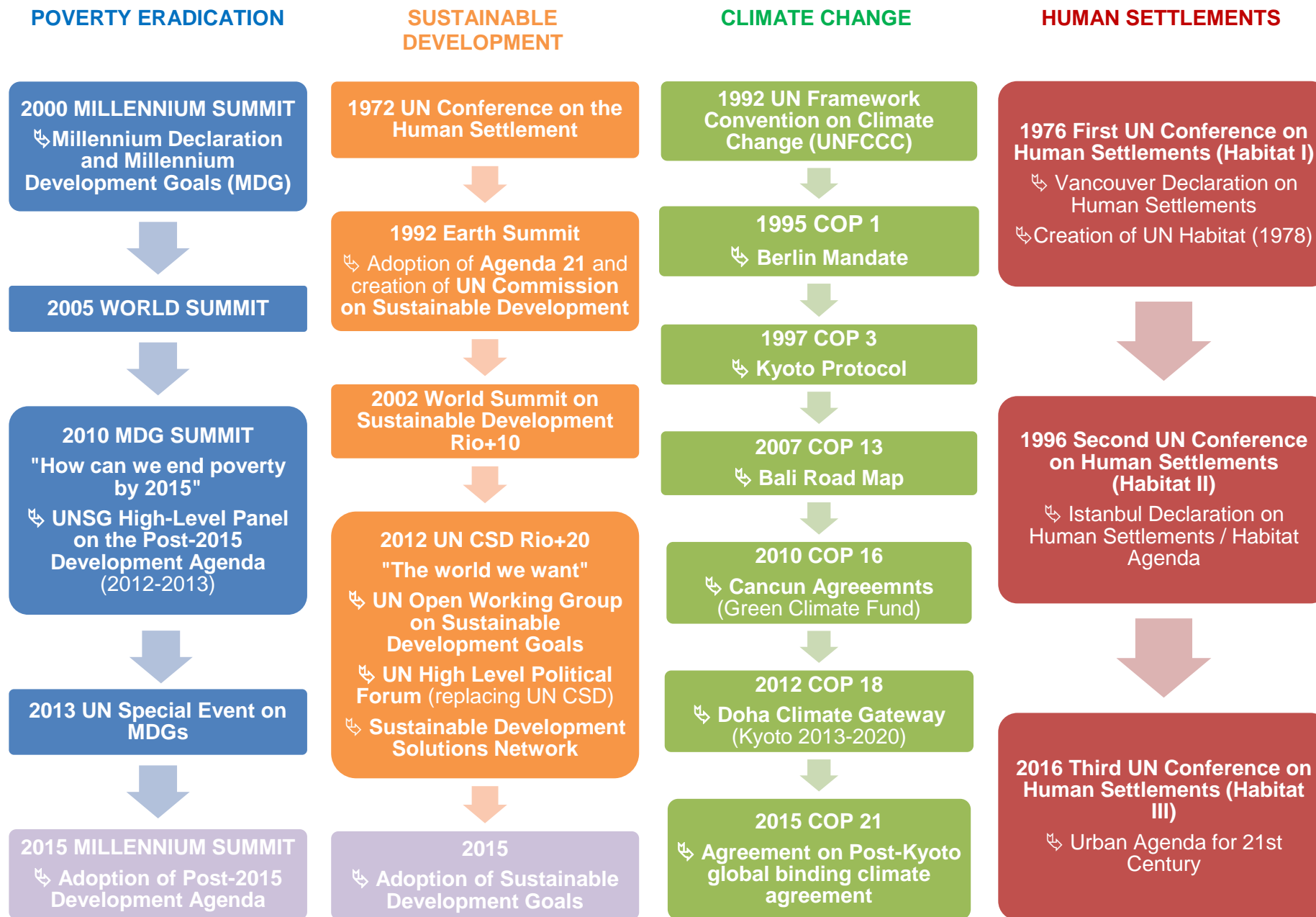
CEMR's action will be guided by the Local Government Climate Roadmap's motto: **recognise, engage, empower**. We will work both at European / EU level through our very own working structures – in particular the focus group on international cooperation and the focus-group on climate and energy policy – and at global level through UCLG.

CEMR will pay **particular attention** at 1) the integration of the different interrelated policy debates into one common position and 2) at guaranteeing that *all* kinds of European local and regional governments are properly represented in our agenda and messages.

As the 2015 Summit on climate change will take place in Europe, CEMR will seek to guarantee the full **participation** of local and regional governments and their associations in the negotiations process. It will coordinate the **lobbying** efforts for decisions that have direct or indirect consequences on local and regional policies and European regulations that affect us.



ANNEX. FOUR CONVERGING PROCESSES FOR LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS



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About CEMR

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) is the broadest organisation of local and regional authorities in Europe. Its members are over 50 national associations of municipalities and regions from 41 European countries. Together these associations represent some 150 000 local and regional authorities.

CEMR's objectives are twofold: to influence European legislation on behalf of local and regional authorities and to provide a platform for exchange between its member associations and their elected officials and experts.

Moreover, CEMR is the European section of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), the worldwide organisation of local government.

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