

STATEMENT TO THE UN HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM

ACTING AT LOCAL LEVEL

NGO Major Group

Emer Costello, Irish Development Education Association (IDEA)

Wednesday, 6th July 2022- 12.00pm – 1.00pm

Post-Covid, it is becoming increasingly apparent that the “localisation” of the SDGs is central to the delivery of all the SDGs – not just SDG11(Sustainable Cities and Communities). There will be no transformation without localisation.

Building back better after Covid must be done from the bottom up – through building more sustainable and more resilient communities.

A central theme that is emerging from this Forum is that education for sustainable development and global citizenship are necessary for the achievement of the SDGs. The localisation agenda must be accompanied by a comprehensive education/lifelong learning programme that engages and mobilises the citizens and ensures their buy-in.

Local governments are central actors in the creation of learning communities for sustainable development. They play a huge role in informal and non-formal learning opportunities through their libraries, museums, arts offices, parks, community gardens, recreation and sporting facilities, and their community and environment departments. They are also key actors in mobilising, forging and articulating partnerships between different local actors such as academia, civil society organisations, and the private sector. They drive innovative solutions to local problems including the creation of sustainable energy communities, the development of sustainable transport models and the promotion of biodiversity. They drive initiatives that both transform their communities and contribute to the achievement of Agenda 2030.

But Local Authorities need to do much more to communicate their initiatives through the prism of the SDGs so as to create a public awareness and understanding of how local communities contribute so much to the achievement of the global agenda.

On a positive note, just last night Dublin City Council voted to include a policy objective to work towards the achievement and implementation of the SDGs in their City Development Plan. They further agreed that matters of education, training and delivery mechanisms for the SDGs would be referred to Policy Committees for implementation and monitoring during the course of the Development Plan (2022-2026).

Finally, local strategies for the achievement of global goals cannot be delivered in isolation – localisation of the SDGs must be a core element of national and international programmes. Not only must there be a strong acknowledgement of the role that cities, regions and local government play in the transformation of communities, there must also be the legal and financial framework to back this up through buy-in and commitment from national governments.

Emer Costello is a former Lord Mayor of Dublin and a former MEP for Dublin, Ireland. She is currently Policy and Advocacy Manager with the Irish Development Education Association.