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REPORT

Local and Regional Governments in the Follow-up and Review of Global Sustainability Agendas

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The analysis, results, and recommendations are those of the authors only and do not represent the position of the Cities Alliance or the members of the Joint Work Programme (JWP) on Cities in the Global Agendas.

Citation

Dellas, Eleni; Alexander Carius, Marianne Beisheim, Susan Parnell, and Dirk Messner 2018: Local and regional governments in the follow-up and review of global sustainability agendas. Berlin/Brussels: adelphi/Cities Alliance.

Imprint

Publisher:	adelphi consult GmbH and Cities Alliance
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Photo credits:	Title: Patrick Foto/shutterstock.com
Acknowledgements:	The authors would like to thank Marie-Alexandra Kurth, Maruxa Cardama, the members of the Cities Alliance Joint Work Programme (JWP) on Cities in the Global Agendas, Luis Eduardo Bresciani and Ahmed A. Diallo for their helpful inputs, suggestions and comments.
Status:	23.02.2018

This report was commissioned by the Cities Alliance.

Executive Summary

The way cities and human settlements are designed, planned, built, financed and governed has far-reaching implications for a life of dignity for all people and for the sustainable future of our planet. Against this background, the international context for sustainable urban development has changed through the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change and the New Urban Agenda. Globally, cities are increasingly recognised as transformative development actors, and their relevance for the implementation of these global agendas is acknowledged. However, institutional and political changes reflecting this acknowledgement have been slow to materialise, and sustainable urban development is not yet the global priority that it should be.

To support implementation and ensure continuous attention to shared global challenges, all three agendas - the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda - outline processes for follow-up and review. While all three agendas recognise the central role of national governments in follow-up and review, the role of local and regional governments is most explicitly recognised in the New Urban Agenda. However, more attention to urban sustainability issues and participation of local and regional governments and their partners in follow-up and review can help support the implementation of the three agendas.

In the coming months and years there are many opportunities to shape the consideration of urban sustainability issues in follow-up and review processes. Firstly, follow-up and review structures at the national, regional and local level are still developing, creating opportunities to define practice in ways that give cities maximum voice. Secondly, at the international level key events are scheduled that provide opportunities for strategic engagement. Thirdly, while specific processes and reports for global follow-up and review are set out in the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda, some practical aspects are still being further elucidated.

Against this background, the Cities Alliance Joint Work Programme (JWP) on Cities in the Global Agendas has commissioned this report. The goal of the report is to develop recommendations for strengthening the synergistic follow-up and review of the urban dimension of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda, and to explore opportunities for a stronger involvement of local and regional governments and their partners in follow-up and review. The conclusions and recommendations, which are summarised below, revolve around several narratives on the need to strengthen attention to urban sustainability issues, and inclusion of local and regional governments and their partners in follow-up and review.

Local and regional governments are legitimate and necessary partners in follow-up and review

Rationale: In United Nations (UN) processes related to sustainable development, local and regional governments are usually involved through the same modalities as non-governmental organisations. However, unlike other major groups or constituencies, local and regional governments that engage in global processes do not usually represent the interests of a particular group or electoral constituency, but advocate for the interests of all citizens in their jurisdiction and on behalf of subnational government as an institution in multi-scalar global and national governance regimes. Engagement of local and regional governments in follow-up and review is therefore a unique opportunity to increase accountability.

The opportunities that do exist for engagement in global policy forums are not always used. For example, to date, participation by local and regional governments and their partners in the global Thematic Reviews of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) has been limited, despite the intended inclusiveness of the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). A lack of awareness of the relevance of the HLPF and/or lack of resources to engage in it are possible reasons for this. We propose the following recommendations to strengthen participation in follow-up and review:

- Use the **Thematic Review of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 11** on cities and human settlements in 2018 to **mobilise and involve** local and regional governments and their partners. The Thematic Reviews have hitherto primarily attracted general development practitioners or SDG experts. The quality of the Thematic Reviews would benefit if the participation of representatives of local and regional governments, urban planners and other representatives of the built environment professions, the urban knowledge community, and other relevant stakeholder groups can also be secured.
- Recognise the opportunity offered by the **Local and Regional Governments Forum** that is planned for the 2018 HLPF. This forum can help raise awareness on the efforts of local and regional governments to localise the SDGs. Its impact can be increased by ensuring that it is attended not only by representatives of local and regional governments, but also e.g. national ministries, UN institutions, civil society, business and academia.
- Provide opportunities for local and regional governments to participate in the **enhanced transparency framework, the global stocktake and the mechanism to facilitate implementation and compliance** of the Paris Agreement. Moreover, local and regional governments and their partners should make use of the opportunity to participate in the 2018 Talanoa Dialogue. To support local and regional government participation in this process, ICLEI is organising a series of Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues.
- Define a clear role for the **World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments** in the follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda. The World Assembly is an important opportunity to demonstrate the added value of a stronger, formalised engagement of local and regional governments in follow-up and review. It envisions a role for itself as a dialogue interface between national governments, UN institutions and other international partners, and local and regional governments. This could, for example, be achieved by discussing joint inputs at the World Assembly that can feed into the quadrennial implementation report of the New Urban Agenda.
- Promote the stakeholder roundtables at the **World Urban Forum (WUF)** as opportunities to involve different actors in follow-up and review. Stakeholder groups should establish preparatory processes that allow them to gather and analyse inputs from their respective constituencies in advance of the WUF. In collaboration with UN-Habitat, they should identify the most suitable format for these inputs for inclusion in the quadrennial implementation report.

Local implementation efforts must be accounted for to adequately evaluate progress

Rationale: In the absence of adequate data on and accounting of local implementation efforts, there is a risk that the overall assessment of progress on the implementation of the global agendas misses a substantial part of the picture. Moreover, without such evaluation of local implementation efforts, their appropriateness, suitability for scaling up, etc. cannot be evaluated, and opportunities for learning from successful implementation efforts are stymied.

Existing initiatives to increase urban data availability and quality are highly fragmented and geographically uneven. For example, the many efforts to report and quantify local climate action are not always in a comparable format or using methods that allow for accurate agglomeration. Consequently, there is a lack of consistent, reliable data on how (and how much) the local level is contributing to meeting national and international climate targets.

Moreover, multiple reports and other inputs feed into the follow-up and review of each of the agendas. This multiplicity of reports raises questions regarding the best strategies for streamlining, compiling, structuring and including local and urban perspectives and data.

- Efforts to **harmonise the indicators and methodologies** used to collect data on the activities of local and regional governments and their partners should be supported and scaled up. For such efforts to have a more significant impact, collaboration with the national level is essential to ensure more widespread adoption of the same indicators and methodologies and to ensure their coherence with national and global data protocols. Moreover, it is essential that data is (territorially) disaggregated.
- Encourage local and regional governments to **make use of existing opportunities to submit reports** to follow-up and review processes. These include the Talanoa Dialogue, the HLPF, and inputs for the quadrennial implementation report on the New Urban Agenda. Associations of local and regional governments could collaborate on preparing a single urban report with strong individual sections on the urban dimensions of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda.

Local implementation capacities must be supported

Rationale: Different levels - or spheres - of government are mutually dependent on each other and their implementation actions can and must be mutually reinforcing. Against this background, national governments must understand how national legal, institutional and financial frameworks influence action by local and regional governments in order to make evidence-based decisions on how to improve such frameworks.

- Encourage national governments to develop workflows with **clear timelines and responsibilities for the revision of national sustainability strategies**, national urban policies, and national climate change policies. In revising their national strategies and policies to improve implementation of the three agendas, national governments should be sensitive to synergies and interactions amongst them, as well as the imperative of locally sensitive implementation action.
- **Institutionalise engagement** of local and regional governments and relevant local actors as key players in such national revision processes. This would improve the inclusiveness of such revisions of national policies. The way such engagement takes place will differ depending on existing platforms and processes in different countries and must take heed of the very varied capacities of municipalities.
- Use the follow-up and review processes to **explicate needs and find suitable support**. The national reports and reviews as well as the Thematic Reviews should

cover not only progress but also problems and obstacles to implementation. To identify appropriate support measures, it is crucial to evaluate where local actors need international assistance in terms of finance, technology, legal or policy advice, organisational development, partnerships, or other forms of capacity building.

Learning on sustainable urban development

Rationale: The best data collection efforts and reports are of limited value if they are not embedded in processes of collective evaluation and opportunities for peer learning. Both directly and indirectly, the summative process of preparing and comparing progress in large scale reporting on global agendas acts as an opportunity for local and regional government practitioners and leaders to come together for reflection, stimulating revision of practice. Such efforts to support collective learning ensure that it is not just the global development community that discusses the challenges and opportunities of implementing the Paris Agreement, the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda, but also those actors that can affect change at different levels.

- Use **regional follow-up and review**, supported by the UN regional commissions, as an opportunity for peer learning amongst UN member states and other stakeholders.
- Encourage collaboration with and among **local and regional government networks** to adjust and scale up their existing learning and leadership initiatives. These networks have long and successful trajectories in enabling peer learning that could be expanded to further the implementation of the three agendas.
- Build critical reflective capacity in the **urban research community** and train the next generation of urban scholars in the methods and issues associated with follow-up and review. To date the urban scholarly community has been only tangentially engaged in the global policy shifts and there is significant scope to scale up the academic role in realising the various global agendas.
- Identify how the **World Urban Forum** can contribute to learning. The WUF is mentioned as a platform for follow-up and review in the New Urban Agenda, yet its role remains unclear. Typical events at such global conferences - where several panellists each have 5-10 minutes to make a statement, followed by (more or less) interactive discussion with the audience – are not ideal for learning or strategy deliberation. A more useful approach could be to focus in-depth on specific cases, for example a specific project implemented in a city. What was the original situation? What was done to ameliorate it? What was the process of getting there? This should be discussed in a manner that is relatable to the targeted actor group.

Partnerships for sustainable urban development

Rationale: Multi-stakeholder partnerships and other cooperative arrangements are important to support the implementation of global agendas. They can foster inclusiveness, mobilise and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources. Follow-up and review is an important means of creating and reinforcing such partnerships. Many partnerships and other cooperative initiatives focusing on urban sustainability issues have already been launched to support the implementation of the global agendas. However, it is often difficult to ascertain what, exactly, such partnerships are contributing to implementation, and whether they are making progress.

- Consider launching an **urban data partnership** to identify data gaps at the local and regional level, and ways to address them. Such a partnership could be launched under the umbrella of existing initiatives, such as the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data. It should identify relevant indicators that exist but are not yet used, as well as indicators that may still need to be developed. It could moreover develop guidelines and other support material for local and regional governments that wish to improve monitoring of urban sustainability issues.
- **Evaluate the activities of partnerships** and other initiatives that self-register in the existing global registries/platforms. Such platforms often encourage partnerships to regularly submit progress reports. These reports can strengthen the evidence base of follow-up and review especially when it is analysed how and what partnerships are contributing.

Synergies across the three agendas

Rationale: Strengthening synergies in follow-up and review across the three agendas is important due to resource and time constraints and to ascertain that interconnections are adequately considered. While the scope for adjusting the global follow-up and review architectures of the three agendas to more strongly emphasise synergies is limited, strengthening the participation of local and regional governments and their partners in the established forums, platforms and other processes can already make an important contribution to harnessing synergies. This is because these actors will be able to emphasise the connections across the three agendas, and promote the discussion of urban sustainability issues.

- Consider addressing synergies across all three agendas in the **quadrennial New Urban Agenda implementation report**. The New Urban Agenda mentions that its implementation report should address not only the New Urban Agenda itself, but also other internationally agreed goals and targets relevant to sustainable urbanisation and human settlements. This is an opportunity to also highlight the urban dimension of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and other UN agendas.
- Emphasise local synergies and interlinkages across the SDGs and the different global agendas during the **Thematic Reviews**. This should go beyond merely highlighting that a particular SDG is connected to other SDGs, towards identifying specific manners in which SDGs and/or agendas reinforce or undermine each other. During the Thematic Review of SDG 11, synergies and interlinkages could also be strengthened by reflecting on the New Urban Agenda implementation report.
- National governments should directly and explicitly address urban sustainability issues and synergies between the three agendas in all relevant **national reports and inputs for global follow-up and review processes**. The relevant reporting guidelines should be updated to encourage this. For example, the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) has recently updated the reporting guidelines for national governments to explicitly encourage UN member states to explain how their flagship national sustainable development policies (and other relevant policies) support the integrated implementation of the SDGs as well as other agendas. National governments should be encouraged to use these voluntary guidelines in preparing for the Voluntary National Reviews.
- Encourage **local and regional governments** to develop their own **synergistic implementation plans** for the three agendas – that include mechanisms for follow-up

and review. Each local government should strive to develop a single plan that addresses all three agendas. For example, local governments can develop local implementation plans that identify how all three agendas discussed in this report, as well as any other contextually relevant agendas, can be localised in their jurisdiction. Such local commitments should from the onset include indicators as well as concrete timeframes and responsibilities for follow-up and review, as better policy decisions and better outcomes at the local level are dependent on a better evidence base and more sophisticated evaluation and reflection.

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List of Abbreviations

AFINUA	Action Framework for Implementation of the New Urban Agenda
APFSD	Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development
cCR	carbonn Climate Registry
CNDU	Consejo Nacional de Desarrollo Urbano
COP	Conference of the Parties
CORECC	Comité Regional de Cambio Climático
CRD	Cadre regional de dialogue
ECLAC	United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
ECOWAS	Economic Community of West African States
ESCAP	Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ETICC	Equipo Técnico Interministerial de Cambio Climático
FMCP	Facilitative, multilateral consideration of progress
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GPSDD	Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data
GSDR	Global Sustainable Development Report
GTF	Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments
GPC	Global Protocol for Community-Scale Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventories
HLPF	United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
ISO	International Organisation for Standardisation
JWP	Joint Work Programme
LAMG	Local Authorities Major Group
LGMA	Local Governments and Municipal Authorities
MINURVI	Asamblea de Ministros y Autoridades Máximas en Vivienda y Desarrollo Urbano de Latinoamérica y el Caribe
MRV	Measurement, Reporting and Verification
NAZCA	Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action
NDC	Nationally Determined Contribution
NGO	Nongovernmental Organisation
Nrg4SD	Network of Regional Governments for Sustainable Development
NUA	New Urban Agenda
P4R	Partners for Review

PNDES	Plan national de développement économique et social
PNDU	Política Nacional de Desarrollo Urbano
QIP	Quito Implementation Platform
RAP	Regional Action Plan
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SDI	Slum Dwellers International
UN	United Nations
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WUF	World Urban Forum

1 Introduction

“To transform our world, we must transform its cities” (Ban Ki-Moon 2016). This statement acknowledges that the way cities and human settlements are designed, planned, built, financed and governed has far-reaching implications for a life of dignity for all people and for the sustainable future of our planet. Against this background, the international context for sustainable urban development has formally changed through the adoption of the New Urban Agenda, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Globally, cities are increasingly recognised as transformative development actors and their relevance for the implementation of these and other global agendas is acknowledged. However, institutional and political changes reflecting this acknowledgement have been slow to materialise. Urban sustainability issues remain largely absent from the agendas of the G7 and the G20, and the topic remains fragmented in many development organisations and country donor agencies. More concerted efforts will be needed to address the global urban challenges of the 21st century. For example, just keeping up with the infrastructure and construction demands required by urban population growth until 2050 may use up more than three quarters of our global CO₂ budget if climate change is to be limited to less than 1.5°C (WBGU 2016: 6). Such structural problems cannot be addressed with incremental changes alone – a genuine transformation is needed (ibid.).

To support implementation and ensure continuous attention to shared global challenges, all three agendas - the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda - outline processes for follow-up and review. While the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) speaks of “measurement, reporting and verification” (MRV), United Nations (UN) member states felt that this wording does not fit the nature of the 2030 Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Hence, the 2030 Agenda speaks of follow-up (monitoring data) and review (analysing data). The New Urban Agenda also adopted this language. In the context of this report, we define *follow-up and review* as the process of discussing efforts to achieve internationally agreed goals, based on progress monitored through systematic data collection efforts and reported through various channels. As of late, *follow-up* is also referred to as the process that needs to happen after review: how are any recommendations made, gaps identified, and amendments proposed during the review process responded to? To ensure an on-going cycle of reflection, follow-up efforts should feed into future reviews: to achieve sustained change, continuous assessments of any efforts to address issues identified at the last review are necessary.

While all three agendas recognise the central role of national governments in follow-up and review, the role of local and regional governments is most explicitly recognised in the New Urban Agenda, which acknowledges the importance of local and subnational governments as active partners in follow-up and review (Res. 71/256, para. 163). However, more attention to urban sustainability issues and participation of local and regional governments and their partners in follow-up and review can help support the implementation of the three agendas. Much work remains to be done to achieve this, as data, processes and structures for monitoring, reporting and reviewing sustainable urban development are lacking or underdeveloped in many countries. There is also a dearth of technical and political capacity to undertake the critical tasks required to reorient existing policies, programmes and practices associated with implementing the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda.

In the coming months and years there are many opportunities to shape the consideration of urban sustainability issues in follow-up and review. On the one hand, policies and programmes to respond to the urban sustainability dimension of these global agendas at the international, national, regional and local level are still developing. On the other hand, key events and processes are scheduled that provide an opportunity for strategic engagement. Important upcoming events and processes include:

- The first **World Urban Forum** since Habitat III in February 2018 – which is recognised in the New Urban Agenda as an important platform for follow-up and review.
- The publication of the first **implementation report** of the New Urban Agenda, which is due in the first half of 2018.
- The first **Thematic Review of Sustainable Development Goal 11** (SDG 11) on cities and human settlements, which will take place at the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in summer 2018.
- The 2018 **Talanoa Dialogue**, which will take stock of collective efforts to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement.

Moreover, while a range of specific processes and reports for follow-up and review at the global level are set out in the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda, some practical aspects are still being further elucidated. For example, discussions on future improvements to the work of the HLPF are on-going. UN member states are also engaged in discussions regarding the positioning and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) in light of the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda, which may also have implications for that institution's involvement in follow-up and review. This is thus a crucial time for the global urban community to sharpen its understanding of and proposals for these follow-up and review processes.

Against this background, the Cities Alliance Joint Work Programme (JWP) on Cities in the Global Agendas identified follow-up and review of the SDGs and the New Urban Agenda as one of its four major focus areas for the period 2017 - 2018. The main goal of this report is to develop recommendations for strengthening the synergistic follow-up and review processes of the urban dimension of these two global agendas and, additionally, the Paris Agreement. We also explore opportunities for a stronger involvement of three categories of actors that have been identified as important agents in follow-up and review:

- **Local and regional governments**,¹ which are two tiers (or spheres) of public administration in many states. Local governments are responsible for the administration of cities, towns and villages, while regional governments are authorities responsible for provinces, federal states, or subnational regions (GTF 2018a). They have specific mandates and powers, but these differ across countries and regions depending on the relationship with national governments.
- **Local actors**, i.e. non-state actors working within cities to support the implementation of global agendas. This includes various stakeholder groups, such as civil society, grass-roots movements, the private sector, philanthropy and academia.

¹ The terminology applied to different spheres or levels of governance is inconsistent and politicised. In this report, we generally refer to "local and regional government", or to "subnational government" as a term that encompasses both these spheres or levels of governance. "Region" is also used to refer to institutions and processes situated in geographic regions above the level of the nation state, such as the UN Regional Commissions. We have made sure that, throughout this paper, when discussing e.g. the "regional level", it is clear from the context what we are referring to.

- **Global urban actors**, i.e. actors working on urban issues at a global scale. Examples include global businesses and philanthropies, nongovernmental organisations (NGOs) and research initiatives operating at the global level, development agencies and international organisations which have collaborated with cities and city networks to implement projects.

We acknowledge that there is an urban and territorial dimension to the follow-up and review of other global agendas, beyond to the three covered in this report. For example, recognising the interconnected and multi-scalar nature of local urban challenges, the Regional Action Plan for the New Urban Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean explicitly links its regional urban priorities to several global agendas – including not only the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda, but also the Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, and the Accelerated Action Modes for Small Island Developing States (Samoa Path). In the European context, the EU Urban Agenda is an example of a regionally specific agenda that is an important reference point for sustainable urban development, in addition to global agendas. In the spirit of acknowledging this diversity and complexity, we strive to develop recommendations that enable such nationally and regionally-specific linkages with different agendas.

This report is structured as follows. *Chapter 2* develops five narratives regarding why a stronger involvement of local and regional governments, local urban actors and global urban actors in follow-up and review is important. It explains why this multi-actor strategy is crucial to achieve the goals that are ascribed to follow-up and review in the three agendas. *Chapter 3* outlines the key elements of the follow-up and review architectures of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda and how they relate to urban sustainability issues. It focuses on the explicit and implicit synergies in the follow-up and review processes of the three agendas. Finally, *chapter 4* develops recommendations for strengthening the follow-up and review of urban sustainability issues in a synergistic manner.

2 Relevance and Goals of Follow-up and Review

Strong follow-up and review processes will be essential to support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda.

Research suggests that there are two key ways in which follow-up and review can support compliance and implementation (Beisheim 2015, Tallberg 2002, both drawing on Chayes and Chayes 1993): through enforcement and peer pressure or through capacity development and better management. According to the first perspective, legally binding commitments in conjunction with sanctions or other forms of peer pressure can encourage implementation. Both the New Urban Agenda and the 2030 Agenda lack legally binding provisions and strong compliance mechanisms. In comparison, the Paris Agreement is a mix of binding and non-binding provisions. For example, Article 4(2) obliges Parties to prepare, communicate and maintain successive nationally determined contributions (NDCs), and to pursue measures to implement these NDCs. Parties are also legally bound to regularly provide information, such as national inventory reports and information to track the implementation and achievement of their NDCs (Decision 1/CP.21, para. 90). However, it is up to countries to decide on the ambition of their NDCs and their contribution to achieving the goals of the Paris Agreement. Moreover there are no enforcement measures if countries fail to implement their NDCs.

The second perspective assumes that states will do their best to implement the agendas they have signed, and that any gaps in implementation are rooted in limited capacities or resources, lack of knowledge on the relationship between policies and impact, or unclear commitments. This suggests that despite a lack of legally binding commitments and/or enforcement measures, the New Urban Agenda, 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement can develop strong normative influence and thus shape national and international policy decisions, influence the funding decisions of national governments, development agencies, multi-lateral banks and other important actors, and incentivise the formation of new multi-stakeholder partnerships.² Strong follow-up and review processes are moreover important to support implementation efforts as they can help identify where there are shortcomings in implementation due to limited capacities, resources, knowledge or unclear commitments, and direct efforts towards addressing these issues. For example, it is possible that there are contradictions, overlaps or gaps in the commitments included in the three global agendas. Synergistic follow-up and review processes can highlight such issues where clarification is needed and thus enable more effective urban policymaking at the global scale.

In the absence of strong compliance mechanisms, the success of all three agendas depends on follow-up and review processes that enable and encourage relevant actors to implement appropriate actions at all scales. The goals that have been ascribed to their follow-up and review processes (see Table 2.1) also reflect this understanding. Thus, rather than naming-and-shaming non-compliant UN member states, they focus on supporting learning and exchanges of best practices, which can encourage behaviour change and the adjustment of

² The fact that none of the three agendas establish legally binding targets and goals for individual countries need not necessarily be a disadvantage. Thus, non-binding agreements “are more flexible and less prone to raise concerns about noncompliance, and thus they allow governments to adopt ambitious targets and far-ranging commitments (...). A binding commitment might be useful for codifying an effort that is already in hand (or which requires actions that are easy for governments to deliver). But uncertain, strenuous efforts at cooperation are easier to organise when the commitments are not formally binding” (Victor 2006: 97).

policies and national and subnational actions to achieve sustainable development (Halle and Wolfe 2016, Persson et al. 2016). Strengthening of multi-stakeholder partnerships is also an important goal of follow-up and review (Beisheim 2015; Beisheim and Ellersiek 2017). The ultimate aim of these efforts is to strengthen the normative commitment to the goals of the three agendas and to inform policymaking and support implementation.

Table 2.1: Goals of follow-up and review

Topic		Goals	Sources
Conditions for implementation	Support and Implementation	Ensure timely and effective implementation Support Parties in enhancing their actions and support Mobilise further actions to accelerate implementation	New Urban Agenda (NUA): para. 161 2030 Agenda: para. 72, 73, 87 Paris Agreement: Art.14, para. 3
	Finance	Overview of support provided and received Full overview of aggregate financial support provided	Paris Agreement: Art.13 para. 6
	Leadership	Political leadership, guidance and recommendations for follow-up High-level political guidance on the Agenda and its implementation	2030 Agenda: para. 82, 87
	Coordination and coherence	Coherence of follow-up and review at the national, regional and global levels Promote system-wide coherence and coordination Coordination and coherence in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda	NUA: para. 161, 164, 168 2030 Agenda: para. 82
Legitimacy	Trust	Build mutual trust	2030 Agenda: para. 73 Paris Agreement: Art. 13 para. 1
	Accountability	Accountability to citizens Transparency	NUA: para. 161 2030 Agenda: para. 73 Paris Agreement: Art.13
Participation	Partnerships and international cooperation	Create and reinforce partnerships Support effective international cooperation Mobilise support to overcome shared challenges	NUA: para. 162 2030 Agenda: para. 73, 84 Paris Agreement: Art.14, para. 3
	Inclusion	Inclusiveness Participation Openness	NUA: para. 161, 162 2030 Agenda: para. 85, 89
Knowledge	Learning	Mutual learning Peer learning Fostering exchanges on best practices Sharing experiences	NUA: para. 162 2030 Agenda: para. 73, 82
	Measuring progress	Track progress Assess impact Support for statistical offices and data systems	NUA: para. 161, 167 2030 Agenda: para. 72, 74, 82 Paris Agreement: Art.13, para. 5; Art.14, para. 1; Art.15, para. 1
	Emerging issues	Identify new and emerging issues	2030 Agenda: para. 73, 82

As national governments are the signatories of the global agendas and the multi-lateral system is built around the sovereignty of states, there is an emphasis on the country-led nature of follow-up and review (e.g. Res. 70/1, para. 74(a), Res. 71/256, para. 162). However, it is widely understood that local action must drive implementation – which should therefore also be reflected in follow-up and review processes (Simon et al, 2016; Steiner, 2017). While inclusive participation in follow-up and review is time consuming and expensive, the narratives below explain why attention to urban issues and involvement of local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors is nonetheless important and moreover crucial for the achievement of the goals of follow-up and review that are summarised in Table 2.1. While opportunities to participate in follow-up and review are important for all three groups of actors, as will become evident below there are reasons to focus in particular on enhancing such opportunities for local and regional governments. For example, local and regional governments are particularly important custodians of key information and data on local implementation efforts that should feed into follow-up and review processes.

2.1 Local and regional governments must be recognised as legitimate and necessary partners in follow-up and review

There are multiple avenues to assess how the global agendas are –if at all – being implemented locally and having a positive transformative impact on people and communities. The participation of local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors in follow-up and review processes at all levels offers a particularly important opportunity.

In UN processes related to sustainable development, local and regional governments are usually involved through the same modalities as non-governmental organisations. For example, at the HLPF local and regional governments are recognised as one of the Major Groups and other Stakeholders³ – the Local Authorities Major Group (LAMG). In the context of the UNFCCC process, local and regional governments participate through the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA) Constituency. Participation in these major groups and constituencies awards local and regional governments several benefits over “normal” observer status, such as the right to make written or oral contributions to official meetings. However, local and regional governments have objected to being group together with non-governmental organisations, given that they are governmental actors with certain legal and fiscal mandates, and prescribed responsibilities toward their citizens. Unlike other major groups or constituencies, local and regional governments engaging in global processes do not usually represent the interests of a particular group or electoral constituency, but advocate for the interests of all citizens in their jurisdiction and on behalf of subnational government as an institution in multi-scalar global and national governance regimes. Thus, while scholars have highlighted the numerous accountability issues associated with self-defining stakeholder group participation in global governance (Why

³ Since the first United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992, nine “Major Groups” serve as the main channels through which broad participation is facilitated in UN activities related to sustainable development; they include the following sectors: Women, Children and Youth, Indigenous Peoples, Non-Governmental Organisations, Local Authorities, Workers and Trade Unions, Business and Industry, Scientific and Technological Community, Farmers. Since the Rio+20 Conference in 2012 governments also invite “other stakeholders”, including local communities, volunteer groups and foundations, migrants and families, as well as older persons and persons with disabilities, to participate in UN processes related to sustainable development. Member States ultimately decide upon the modalities of participation of Major Groups and other Stakeholders, while UNDESA/Division for Sustainable Development helps to coordinate their input.

these groups? Whose interests are represented? Who are the representatives of the major groups accountable to?), these concerns do not apply to local and regional governments to the same extent as they are more clearly embedded in traditional modes of accountability: they are answerable to the citizens that elected them, or the national governments that appointed them. Participation of local and regional governments in follow-up and review is therefore also a unique opportunity to widen engagement with all the parts of government that implement the global goals and increase citizen accountability. As local government is often tasked with the services that are most directly related to the achievement of the three agendas (planning, land use, water, waste etc.) there is also a strong pragmatic reason for bringing them in the follow-up and review process.

Opportunities for the participation of non-state local actors (including e.g. traditional authorities, grass-roots movements, labour organisations) and global urban actors (including e.g. transnational corporations and private banks) in follow-up and review processes are also important. Due to their local power to support – or obstruct - the implementation of the three global agendas in cities it is important that the full spectrum of stakeholders is reached and their voices heard. Such participation in follow-up and review supports the sharing of lessons learned, provides an opportunity to discuss how good practices can be scaled up, and can mobilise more actors to contribute to implementation.

2.2 Local implementation efforts must be accounted for to adequately evaluate progress

The recognition of local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors as legitimate and necessary partners is an important precondition for considering data on their implementation efforts in follow-up and review. This, in turn, is essential to ensure that data collection and reporting leads to a comprehensive picture of progress and that the contribution of the local level to reaching shared international development goals is adequately accounted for.

In the absence of adequate data on and accounting of local implementation efforts, there is a risk that their appropriateness, suitability for scaling up, etc. cannot be evaluated, and opportunities for learning from successful implementation efforts are stymied. This risk is illustrated by the geographic imbalance in the urban climate actions that have thus far been reported to global platforms. For example, Hsu et al. (2016: 304) find that 74% of the local government initiatives recorded in the Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action (NAZCA) take place in Europe, while Africa and the Middle East are particularly underrepresented. This does not necessarily mean that less local climate action is taking place in the latter regions, just that it is not being recorded to the same extent in international reporting platforms such as NAZCA. Reasons why some local governments may not be recording their actions in NAZCA include a lack of resources or a lack of motivation to do so (ibid.). In significant parts of Africa and Asia, there is no formal local government or the capacity of local governments is so weak that it is not possible to generate reporting against global processes. A lack of incentives or (perceived) lack of added value may be further reasons why local governments choose not to monitor and report their implementation efforts.

A further reason why it is important to account for the contribution of these actors to the implementation of global agendas is that this may help national governments to ramp up their own ambition. For example, the Local Governments and Municipal Authorities Constituency has highlighted that local and regional governments can contribute to raising

the ambition of NDCs (ENB 2017b: 17). The underlying idea is that, if local climate action is adequately monitored, aggregated and considered at the national level, it will become clear that the scope for emissions reductions is greater than currently reflected in the goals of NDCs.

To include the actions of local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors in the overall assessment of progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda will necessitate substantial improvements in data availability at a territorial scale, recognition of third-party data, and harmonisation of data collection and aggregation methodologies. Moreover, actors must have the capacity to collect and report on such data at regular intervals and all parties need to recognise the legitimacy of the data and analysis produced. Local and regional governments are invariably important custodians of key information and are therefore key players in data harmonisation and curation.

2.3 Local implementation capacities must be supported

Different levels of government are mutually dependent on each other and their implementation actions can and must be mutually reinforcing. For example, in many countries national governments shape the legal, institutional and financial context within which local and regional governments operate. Thus, the policies, laws and initiatives put in place by national government may support – or obstruct – local action. Conversely, national governments rely on regional and local governments to help implement national sustainable development strategies, national climate policies and national urban policies. Research has moreover shown that implementation of 65% of SDG targets is at risk if local urban stakeholders are not involved (Misselwitz et al. 2016: 9). There is also evidence that the point of integration and impact across SDGs and global agendas is at the local scale (ICSU 2017).

Against this background, national governments must understand how national legal, institutional and financial frameworks influence action by local and regional governments in order to make evidence-based decisions on how to improve such frameworks. This is demonstrated by research on local climate action. Studies have found that despite the impressive implementation efforts already taking place in cities, there is potential for far more significant efforts (Höhne et al. 2016, Erickson and Tempest 2014). A lack of finance, human resources and appropriate legal and institutional frameworks are key stumbling blocks that may inhibit more extensive local climate action, and which national governments are in a position to shape to be more conducive for implementation. By highlighting the current successes and future potential of local action, follow-up and review can guide national governments in adjusting and / or scaling up support to local and regional government actions. Thus, follow-up and review are essential to ensure that local realities are adequately considered and reflected in the design of national strategies (Simon et al. 2016).

2.4 Partnerships for sustainable urban development

Multi-stakeholder partnerships and other cooperative arrangements are considered important to support the implementation of global agendas. For example, the New Urban Agenda recognises international cooperation and partnerships among governments at all levels, the private sector, civil society, the United Nations system and other actors (Res. 71/256, para. 126). Similarly, the 2030 Agenda recognises the importance of partnership amongst different actors (Res. 70/1, para. 39). SDG target 17.16 in particular calls for multi-stakeholder partnerships that mobilise and share knowledge, expertise, technology and financial resources to support the achievement of the SDGs. Partnerships are also crucial for sustainable urban development, and in this context should involve both local and regional governments, local actors, and global urban actors.

Follow-up and review is recognised as an important means of creating and reinforcing partnerships (e.g. Res. 71/256, para. 162; Res. 70/1, para. 74(c)). During follow-up and review, implementation gaps may be identified, providing an incentive to establish or strengthen partnerships that address such shortcomings in implementation. Participation of local and regional governments, local actors, and global urban actors in follow-up and review is necessary to provide a space for the formation of partnerships to catalyse sustainable urban development.

Moreover, the partnerships themselves should report on their activities (e.g. Res. 70/1, para. 89). Without such reporting of partnership activities, it is difficult to establish an understanding of what, exactly, these voluntary partnerships are contributing to implementation and which efforts may merit scaling up (Beisheim 2015, 2016).

2.5 Learning for sustainable urban development

Follow-up and review processes at all levels are essential to develop an accurate picture of progress on the implementation of global agendas. However, the value of progress reports that address urban sustainability issues will be limited if they are not embedded in processes that allow actors to reflect on their messages, discuss advances and shortcomings, learn from them, and consequently adjust policies and programmes where necessary (Dellas and Schreiber 2018). Thus, it follows that if local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors are acknowledged as crucial implementation actors whose efforts must be included in assessments of impact and progress, then the essential learning processes to support future advances in impact and progress should also include them.

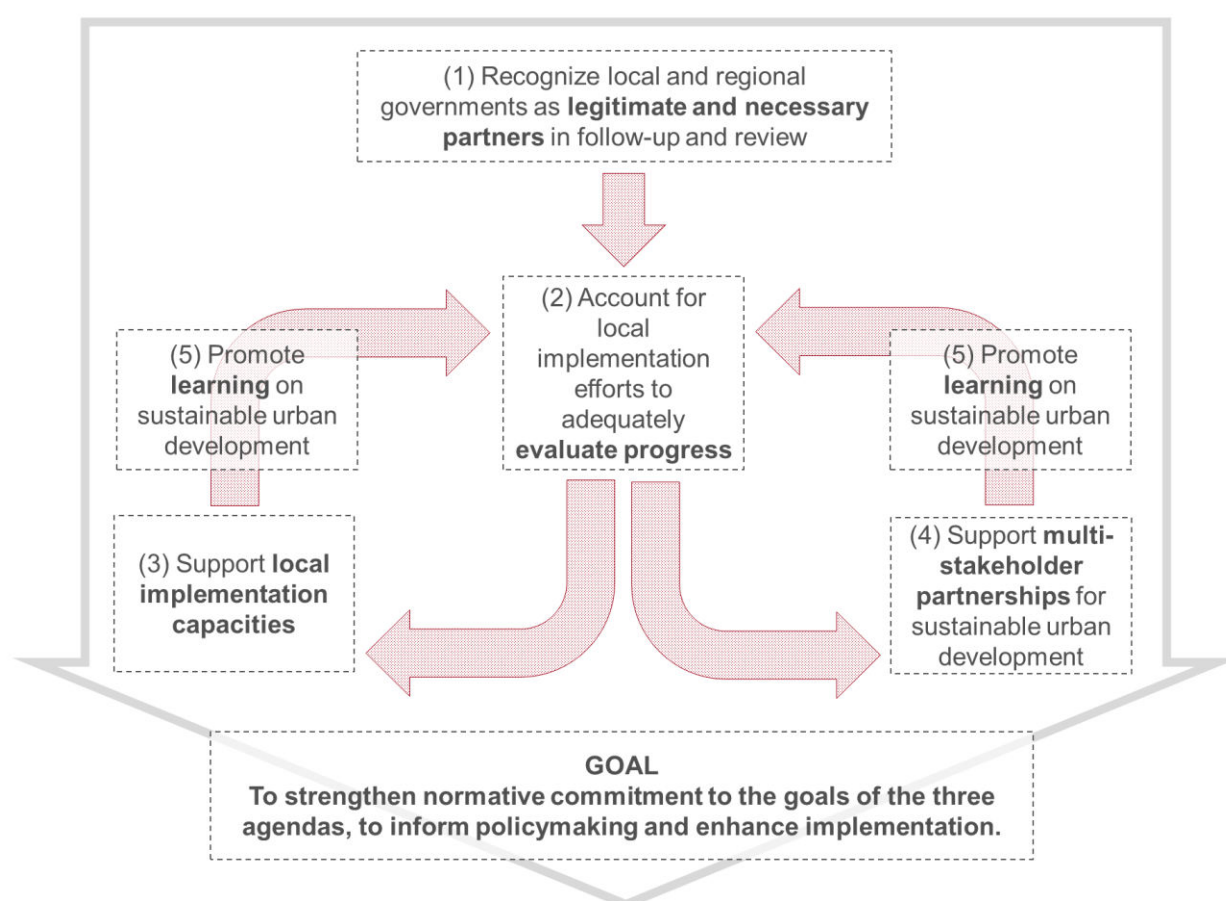
2.6 Conclusion

The five narratives outlined above indicate why it is important to involve local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors in follow-up and review. One issue that we have not explicitly addressed thus far is why these actors might be interested in participating in these processes themselves. After all, participation in follow-up and review requires substantial resources and time. This investment may be worthwhile as it can help these actors to fulfil their mandates and goals. For example, improvements in national legal, institutional and financial frameworks that are implemented as a consequence of inclusive

and evidence-based follow-up and review can help local and regional governments effectively exercise their powers. Effective multi-stakeholder partnerships can mobilise additional resources, skills and knowledge for sustainable urban development, thus supporting the development of healthier, more inclusive and more sustainable cities. The acknowledgement of local and regional governments as legitimate and necessary partners in follow-up and review can moreover help improve relations between different spheres or levels of government.

The five narratives raise many questions. If local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors are to be involved in follow-up and review, what does this mean in practice? Who represents them? Who should participate at different levels, and through what processes and platforms? The task for the following chapters is to analyse the existing follow-up and review architecture and develop recommendations on these and other issues, based on the existing frameworks for follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda, 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement.

Figure 2.1: Five interconnected narratives for follow-up and review



3 Follow-up and Review Architectures and Synergies

This chapter provides an overview of the existing elements of the follow-up and review architectures of the 2030 Agenda, the New Urban Agenda and the Paris Agreement. We also highlight open issues that remain to be decided, and describe relevant multi-stakeholder partnerships that support follow-up and review. We specifically focus on the synergies in the follow-up and review processes of the three agendas and analyse the extent to which local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors can participate in the existing follow-up and review processes, and reflect on the scope for consideration of urban issues.

3.1 The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development explicitly recognises the importance of cities and human settlements as drivers for sustainable development in Sustainable Development Goal 11 as well as in the targets of various other SDGs. Its follow-up and review architecture is designed as a multi-level process in which the United Nations High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development has a central role in overseeing a network of follow-up and review processes at the global level (Res. 70/1, para. 82).

Global follow-up and review architecture

The HLPF is structured around a four-year cycle. Every year, the HLPF takes place under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), with an overarching theme and focus on a different subset of SDGs. Every four years, the HLPF also takes place under the auspices of the General Assembly, with a focus on high-level political guidance and implementation for the overall 2030 Agenda and its 17 SDGs.

The annual agenda of the HLPF is structured around **Thematic Reviews** (Res. 70/1, para. 85), during which a subset of SDGs are reviewed in-depth, and **Voluntary National Reviews** (VNRs) (para. 84), which allow member states to present their progress on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. Further key inputs for the HLPF include **reports from regional and sub-regional review processes** (para. 80), an **annual progress report on the SDGs** and the quadrennial **Global Sustainable Development Report** (para. 83). The outcomes of the HLPF under the auspices of ECOSOC include a **negotiated ministerial declaration** (Res. 70/299, para. 20) and a **factual summary** of the discussions by the ECOSOC President.

The **HLPF** is intended to be an inclusive forum. Thus, while reviews are state-led, both the VNRs at the HLPF and at national level should also include civil society, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders or organisations (Res. 70/1, para. 84). Further opportunities for participation include the fact that **major groups and other relevant stakeholders are encouraged to report** on their contribution to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (para. 89). Thus, local and regional governments may also report at the HLPF, which the Global Task Force of Local and Regional Governments (GTF) did in 2017 when it presented a report that showcased how local and regional governments are localising the SDGs and

provided evidence of their potential to support the implementation and monitoring of the SDGs.

The **Thematic Reviews** are in-depth reviews of progress on each of the SDGs. Each year, a set of goals and their interlinkages are reviewed, so that all goals are reviewed in depth in a four-year cycle (Res. 70/299, para. 4). This focus on interlinkages reflects the holistic perspective of the 2030 Agenda. Engagement of all relevant stakeholders in the Thematic Reviews is emphasised (Res. 70/1, para. 85). However, in the current process of preparing and conducting Thematic Reviews stakeholders have, in practice, had a limited role. Currently, the preparation for Thematic Reviews includes the compilation by UNDESA of background notes on the SDGs to be reviewed in a given year, as well as expert group meetings. Some observers have commented that the Thematic Review sessions at the HLPF tend to be rather superficial and attended by general development practitioners and SDG experts, rather than representatives of the particular thematic community (Demailly and Hege 2017). Moreover, scholars have noted that the urban community is as yet poorly formed and only weakly constituted (McPhearson, et al, 2016; Acuto et al, 2018), suggesting that, in 2018 when SDG 11 is considered at the HLPF, engagement from specialists on the urban question may be disappointing.

The conduct of the Thematic Reviews has been subject to debate and discussions on potential improvements. These discussions are particularly timely from an urban and territorial perspective, since SDG 11 will be reviewed at the HLPF in 2018. Open questions in this context are:

- How can, and should, local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors be involved in the Thematic Review of SDG 11 and the review of its **interlinkages** with other SDGs?
- What kind of **preparatory and follow-up processes** need to be in place to make the best out of the limited time at the HLPF?
- In addition to the background note prepared by UNDESA, what **inputs** will be provided for or discussed during the Thematic Review of SDG 11? What is the role of the quadrennial implementation report on the New Urban Agenda and other reports – for example by local and regional government associations - in this context?
- How will **interlinkages**⁴ between SDG 11 and other SDGs be discussed during the Thematic Review of SDG 11, and during the Thematic Reviews of other SDGs? How and where are the lessons learnt on interlinkages captured and fed in to follow-up processes at the national and subnational level?

The **Voluntary National Reviews** at the HLPF are an opportunity for UN member states to present and discuss their national reports on progress on implementing all of the SDGs.⁵ Similarly to the Thematic Reviews, the format of and guidelines for the VNRs are work in progress. For example, observers have commented that the VNRs during the HLPF do not really encourage the sort of in-depth exchanges on challenges, opportunities and policy coherence for integrated SDG implementation that are necessary for learning to occur. Reasons for this include the limited time that is available for the discussion of each national

⁴ For in-depth discussions on interlinkages between the different SDGs and SDG targets, see for example Nilsson et al. (2016) and ICSU (2017).

⁵ 22 and 43 countries presented during the 2016 and 2017 VNRs, respectively (UNDESA 2017). 48 countries have announced the intention to participate in the VNRs in 2018 (UN 2018a).

report, and the tendency of UN member states to present their national progress reports with a focus on what is going well, rather than an open discussion of challenges faced and implementation gaps (Martens 2016). Nonetheless, the VNRs can also be an opportunity for local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors to contribute to the follow-up and review process, for example by contributing to the preparation of national reports (see for example UNDESA 2017, UCLG 2017). As the preparation of the reports presented during the VNRs takes place at the national level, this process is discussed in detail in the section below on the national and subnational follow-up and review architecture.

In general, the **UN Economic and Social Council** is dedicating its 2018 session (from July 2017 to July 2018) to the theme “From global to local: supporting sustainable and resilient societies in urban and rural communities”. Accordingly, the 2018 ECOSOC Integration Segment (1-3 May) will address the theme “Innovative communities: leveraging technology and innovation to build sustainable and resilient societies”. Its goal is to consider best practices, lessons learned and recommendations at the national, regional and international levels, with a view to develop action-oriented recommendations for follow-up. Hence, this is another arena where local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors should push for their active participation.

Regional follow-up and review architecture

Regional and subregional commissions are invited to cooperate in the implementation of regional and subregional follow-up and review processes, which are intended as a link between the national level and global level reviews at the HLPF (Res. 70/1, para. 80). The 2030 Agenda moreover identifies follow-up and review at the regional and sub-regional level as a space for peer learning (ibid.) – i.e. exchanges amongst states facing shared challenges and opportunities. The UN regional commissions are expected to play a strong role in this respect, as well as other regional and subregional commissions and organisations, as seen appropriate by states. Examples of regional follow-up and review include the **Asia-Pacific Forum on Sustainable Development (APFSD)**, which builds on preparatory sessions that occur in each sub-region of the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The annual APFSD sessions focus on in-depth reviews of those SDGs that will be reviewed in-depth at the HLPF in the same year. The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) explicitly aspires to be more than a preparatory forum for the HLPF, having set up the **Forum of the Countries of Latin America and the Caribbean on Sustainable Development** as a regional mechanism to follow-up and review the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

National and subnational follow-up and review architecture

The 2030 Agenda encourages UN member states to conduct regular inclusive reviews of progress at the national and subnational levels (Res. 70/1, para. 79). It is up to the countries themselves to define which actors (including local and regional governments and other local actors) to involve in this process, and how. Consequently, the degree and type of involvement of local and regional governments varies considerably. In a handful of cases, associations of local and regional governments were able to directly contribute sections to national reports (e.g. the Netherlands), or were involved in consultations through existing platforms for interactions between different levels of government (e.g. Colombia) (UCLG 2017: 20). In other cases, ad hoc consultation platforms were created, or involvement of local and regional governments occurred primarily thorough questionnaires or online consultations (ibid: 21). Many cities, states and countries have also begun developing local

indicators to support local monitoring of SDG progress (e.g. Kenya, Egypt, Brazil, Jalisco / Mexico and Hannover / Germany) (ibid.).

Boxes 3.1 and 3.2 illustrate how Indonesia and Burkina Faso have integrated reporting on SDG implementation at the local, regional and national level into multi-level systems.

Box 3.1: Indonesia's SDG Coordination Team

Indonesia has integrated the SDGs into relevant plans and policies to ensure implementation. These include the national development plan and the national urban policy. Each of the 34 Indonesian Provinces moreover has to develop its own provincial development plan, with appropriate indicators (UCLG 2017: 35). Local authorities also develop local action plans to support the implementation of the national action plan at the local level.

At the national level, a key institution for the implementation and follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda is the SDG National Coordination Team. The SDG Coordination Team is responsible for horizontal coordination at the national level (e.g. between ministries), as well as vertical coordination (different levels of government) (UN 2017). Its tasks include activities such as reviewing the local action plans developed by local governments. Moreover, reports from the provinces are consolidated in an annual national report on SDG implementation.

The SDG Coordination Team consists of a Steering Committee, Implementing Team, Working Groups, Expert Teams and SDG Secretariat, with broad stakeholder representation being a characteristic of the Implementing Team and Working Groups.

Indonesia presented its VNR at the HLPF in 2017. The process of preparing the VNR was intended to be inclusive, e.g. by involving stakeholders in the technical team that prepared the VNR (UN 2017). Consultations were conducted in different Indonesian Provinces.

Box 3.2: Burkina Faso's subnational reviews

Burkina Faso's National Economic and Social Development Plan (Plan national de développement économique et social - PNDES) outlines the country's development strategy for the period 2016-2020. The PNDES draws on a range of different documents for inspiration, including the political programme of the current President of the country, national plans such as the National Land Management and Sustainable Development Plan, the African Union Agenda 2063, the SDGs, and the Community Strategic Framework of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) (Government of Burkina Faso 2016).

The PNDES has a strong urban component. For example, the diagnostic analysis of the current situation highlights that rapid urbanization is a challenge due to the lack of planning capacity and weak urban governance (Government of Burkina Faso 2016). The strategic objectives of the PNDES include the goal of reinforcing decentralization and promoting good local governance (strategic objective 1.3), and developing high quality and resilient infrastructure for a structural transformation of the economy (strategic objective 3.4) (ibid.). These two strategic objectives are clearly linked to the urban dimension of the 2030 Agenda.

All levels of government are involved in the review of the implementation of the PNDES. Local governments may choose to prepare local development programmes that are aligned with the PNDES but focus on specific local priorities. The extent to which there is a separate follow-up and review structure for such local development programmes is up to the local governments to decide.

At the regional level implementation of the PNDES is reviewed every six months, by a committee (cadre régional de dialogue – CRD) that is chaired by the regional governor, with participation of the president of the regional council, deconcentrated ministerial bodies, local governments, the private sector, civil society, and other actors (Government of Burkina Faso 2016).

At the national level, responsibility for the review of the implementation of the PNDES rests with the office of the Prime Minister, and draws on inputs from the regional and local level.

With respect to national follow-up and review, a further key question concerns what happens after a country has presented its VNR at the HLPF. What processes and mechanisms are in place to ensure that lessons learned and challenges identified during the VNR result in appropriate changes at the national, regional and local level? For example, Germany has a clear timeline for the revision of its national sustainability strategy, which is an important opportunity for incorporating lessons learned. Crucially, an inter-ministerial working group on sustainable urban development and municipal associations are among the actors involved in this revision process. In Brazil, a National Commission for the Sustainable Development Goals was created, which brings together representatives from the federal, state, district and municipal governments as well as civil society. Its activities include proposing measures to support implementation, monitoring and following-up implementation.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships

Table 3.1 provides an overview of some initiatives and multi-stakeholder partnerships that support the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. We include initiatives with a specific relevance for urban issues and actors, as well as other initiatives that do not have an explicitly urban focus but that are interesting for other reasons. Many (but not all) relevant initiatives and partnerships are registered in the “Partnerships for the SDGs” registry. As of January 2018, this registry provides information on 260 initiatives that claim to work on SDG 11 (UN 2018b).

Multi-stakeholder partnerships and other relevant initiatives target different actors and needs. For example, **Know Your City** is an initiative that helps the inhabitants of informal settlements collect data on their community. Local governments often lack information about the situation in informal settlements, which in turn leads to an inadequate consideration of their needs and challenges. By collecting standardised community data, Know Your City helps communicate the situation in informal settlements to government actors (IIED 2014).

While Know Your City thus addresses the needs of informal communities and offers a tool to integrate them into local follow-up and review processes, the **Partners for Review (P4R)** network aims to support peer learning among representatives from UN member states and other stakeholders. Its aim is to support the advancement of national follow-up and review structures. The network is interesting for its decentralised approach – meetings do not take place in the context of the HLPF, but have instead thus far taken place in Bonn, Bogota, and Kampala – which may facilitate participation of a different set of actors than the ‘usual suspects’ that attend meetings in New York. Moreover, the organisers strive to create a confidential and trusting environment to allow for discussion of real challenges, which may not receive sufficient attention in public meetings due to reputational risks.

Other initiatives listed above are focused on improving the representation of local and regional governments at follow-up and review events of the United Nations. For example, The **Local Authorities Major Group** coordinates amongst associations of local and regional governments to ensure the inclusion of their positions in decision-making, follow-up and review of international processes (GTF 2018a).

Table 3.1: Examples of multi-stakeholder partnerships to support 2030 Agenda follow-up and review

Name	Level	Key actors	Description
Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data (GPSDD)	Inter-national	More than 150 partners from government, business, civil society, academia, statistical agencies, academia, etc.	Network of state and non-state actors that aims to support improvements in data availability (GPSDD 2018).
Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments (GTF)	Inter-national	Multiple local and regional government associations.	The GTF has participated in the 2017 HLPF, preparing a report on the involvement of local and regional governments in follow-up and review and presenting it at the HLPF (GTF 2018b).
Implementing the New Urban Agenda and The Sustainable Development Goals: Comparative Urban Perspectives	Inter-national	Mistra Urban Futures, Observatory on Latin America, The New School, Nagrika.	Research project to test targets and indicators for SDG 11 in four cities around the world (Mistra Urban Futures 2018).
Know Your City	Local	SDI and UCLG Africa.	Initiative to collect citywide data on informal settlements (SDI 2018).
Local Authorities Major Group (LAMG)	Inter-national	ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability, nrg4SD, UCLG.	The LAMG is local and regional governments' legitimate institutionalised channel for engagement in UN processes related to sustainable development – including the HLPF (GTF 2018a).
Monitoring and Reporting on Human Settlement Indicators in Africa and Latin America	National	UN-Habitat, government agencies from partner countries.	UN-Habitat project that supports measurement, monitoring and reporting on urban SDG indicators in Botswana, Tunisia, Ecuador and Colombia (UN-Habitat 2018a).
Partners for Review (P4R)	Trans-national	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation, German Federal Environment Ministry, giz (as secretariat).	Network to support peer learning amongst states and stakeholders (P4R 2018).
Reference Framework for Sustainable European Cities	Regional	Platform 31, Council of European Municipalities and Regions, ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability.	Includes indicators to help cities monitor progress on the various European agendas (Leipzig Charta, EU Urban Agenda), the SDGs, etc. (RFSC 2018).

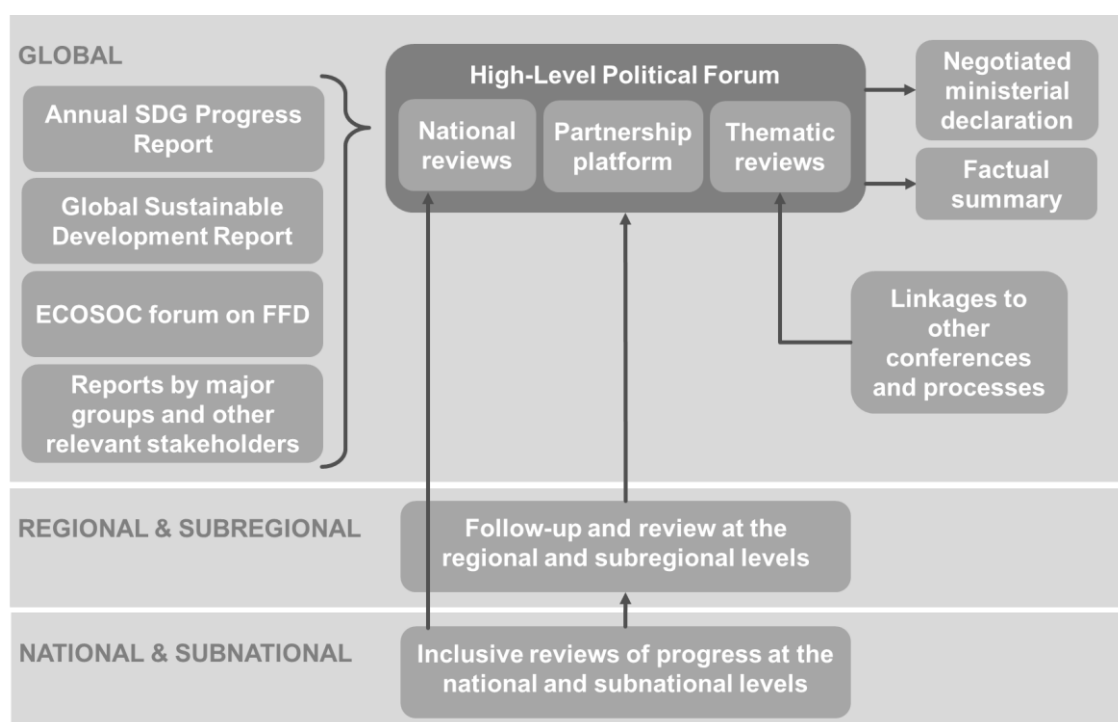
Fostering synergies with other agendas

As outlined above, synergies with other agendas are of central importance to the follow-up and review process of the 2030 Agenda. For example, the 2030 Agenda explicitly emphasises that the HLPF will establish linkages with the follow-up and review arrangements of all relevant United Nations conferences and processes (Res. 70/1, para.

82). Thus, rather than duplicating the follow-up and review of other UN conferences and processes – e.g. Paris Agreement / SDG 13, New Urban Agenda / SDG 11 – the HLPF is to draw on these follow-up and review processes, and ensure coherence across the different thematic areas. Considering the flow of information that is intended to feed into the HLPF not just from the follow-up and review of other UN conferences and processes but also the VNRs, the Global Sustainable Development Report and annual SDG progress report, reports by stakeholders, regional commissions, etc., there is a “risk that this massive flood will overwhelm the HLPF and ensure that its debates are confined to generalities” (Halle and Wolfe 2016: 5).

The linkages between the 2030 Agenda and other UN conferences and processes are still developing. One example is the follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda, which is explicitly linked to the HLPF through a quadrennial report that feeds into the forum. UN member states also discussed linkages between the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda, for example during a high-level event on Climate Change and the Sustainable Development Agenda in March 2017. While there was significant attention to synergies in implementation, discussions on synergies in follow-up and review were scarcer, although some countries suggested linkages between the UNFCCC and the HLPF, as well as stocktaking events on the linkages between the SDGs and the Paris Agreement (ENB 2017a: 4).

Figure 3.1: Key elements of the 2030 Agenda follow-up and review



Lessons Learned

Involvement of local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors in the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda **has thus far been limited**. Their engagement in the HLPF has been low, and involvement in national processes to prepare VNRs has been mixed, with much room for improvement. Overall, local and regional governments have been

involved in the preparation of VNRs in only 38 countries (58%) of those that have thus far reported to the HLPF (UCLG 2017). This suggests that local and regional governments are not yet fully recognised as legitimate governmental partners in follow-up and review, or that existing mechanisms for their involvement are inadequate. However, there are opportunities to strengthen their role in the coming years. For example, as SDG 11 is reviewed at the 2018 edition of the HLPF, the meaningful involvement of local and regional governments at this HLPF session will be as relevant as ever. First steps in this direction are already being taken, as UNDESA has invited the Global Taskforce and other local and regional government associations to co-organise a Local and Regional Authorities Forum at the 2018 HLPF. As the Secretary-General's current reform of the UN development system aims at strengthening the work of the regional structures, this arena will also become more relevant in the near future.

The integrated nature of the SDGs necessitates dedicated consideration of urban sustainability issues during the Thematic Reviews of all SDGs at the HLPF and vice versa. Appropriate processes are needed to ensure that such interlinkages can be established in a meaningful way, without overburdening the already tight schedule of the HLPF and submitting even more inputs to be considered at an event that must annually reflect on tens, if not hundreds of reports and other inputs.

The **HLPF** has a crucial role in **fostering an annual recommitment** to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and **increasing international attention** for important topics. Thus, while the extent to which the HLPF can contribute to other goals of follow-up and review, such as encouraging mutual learning is debatable – as mentioned above, the VNRs leave little space for the sort of in-depth exchanges that are necessary to achieve this – the HLPF is nonetheless an important platform for participation of local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors. The profile given to urban sustainability issues and actors at the HLPF is also a stimulant for national governments to engage local and regional governments, local actors and global actors in their urban spaces more directly. Moreover, the format and organisational aspects of the HLPF and its VNRs are up for review and revision at the 74th session of the General Assembly (2019/20) (Res. 70/299). Lessons learned will likely be discussed during the 2019 HLPF under the auspices of the General Assembly in September 2019.

More efforts to **foster exchanges across governance levels** are essential to ensure full implementation as well as adequate conditions for implementation at the local and regional level. Of the countries that have thus far reported to the HLPF, only 27 (44%) countries have included local and regional governments “in high-level decision-making or consultation mechanisms created for the coordination and follow-up of the SDGs” (UCLG 2017: 11). However, such mechanisms are essential to ensure that national governments understand challenges and opportunities for implementation of the SDGs at the local and regional level, and how legal frameworks, policies and resources can be shaped and channelled to create better conditions for implementation.

Urban sustainability issues need to be considered in the **picture of overall progress on** the 2030 Agenda at all levels. While the annual SDG report tracks progress on the global indicator framework for the SDGs – including indicators on urban issues – much work is still needed to meet the 2030 Agenda's aspiration of data that is disaggregated to ensure that no one is left behind (Res. 70/1, para. 48). Initiatives to address this challenge from an urban perspective include, for example, an ISO standard that certifies cities on their services and quality of life (**ISO 37120**), projects to develop national indicator frameworks for data collection at the municipal level, toolboxes on subnational data for sustainable development

(e.g. by the **Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data**), and initiatives to help mobilise citizen-generated data to track progress on the SDGs (e.g. **Know Your City** and a toolbox on citizen-generated data by the GPSDD).

This range of initiatives to support improved local data availability is crucial to gain a better understanding of what is happening on the ground. Moreover, the different initiatives target different actor groups, thus helping them to contribute their own data to follow-up and review. However, considering that even those initiatives targeting local governments – such as the City Prosperity Initiative and ISO 37120 – all use different indicator sets, definitions and standards vary greatly and the base data being collected is not necessarily comparable. If cities within the same country apply different indicators to measure their own progress, this limits the extent to which data can be aggregated at the national level. Missing data and poor data remain very severe concerns across a surprisingly large number of places.

The importance of reflecting on the little understood composite impacts, synergies and incommensurability of local actions and how these agglomerate has been highlighted by the science community as a key concern for the urban dimension of the 2030 Agenda (Bai et al., 2017; Acuto et al. 2018). Crucially, there is a lack of mechanisms that link local knowledge to global reporting processes, beyond that of the major groups, which are designed as a participatory process for knowledge professionals and not a formative or evaluative support structure.

Bottom-up, voluntary initiatives are both a challenge and an opportunity for follow-up and review processes. On the one hand, the vast range of initiatives that have sprung up to support the follow-up and review of the SDGs mean that the needs of different actors can be addressed. In this sense, the multiplicity of initiatives is not necessarily a sign of redundancy, but of adaptability to different contexts and demands, and perhaps even experimentation with different approaches. The formal follow-up and review structures outlined in global agendas can – and should – be complemented by the bottom-up development of initiatives that address the different needs of different actors (Dellas and Schreiber 2018). On the other hand, there are also risks inherent to this bottom-up development of follow-up and review initiatives, such as duplication of efforts, uncertainties regarding which initiatives to engage with, development of incompatible standards and approaches, etc.

3.2 The New Urban Agenda

The New Urban Agenda outlines a vision and implementation plan for functional, safe, inclusive, sustainable and resilient cities. The key elements of its follow-up and review process and opportunities for involvement of local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors are outlined below.

Global follow-up and review architecture

At the global level, a key element of the follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda is an **implementation report** that will be prepared by UN-Habitat in collaboration with other relevant UN entities (Res. 71/256, para. 168). The report itself – which will cover not only progress on the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, but also other internationally agreed goals and targets relevant to sustainable urbanisation and human settlements - will be submitted to the General Assembly through ECOSOC, as well as **the HLPF** under the auspices of the General Assembly (para. 168).

The activities of national, local and regional governments are amongst the inputs to be considered in the implementation report, which should moreover respond to local, subnational and national circumstances and legislation, capacities, needs and priorities (Res. 71/256, para. 167). The report should build on existing platforms and processes, such as the **World Urban Forum** convened by UN-Habitat (para. 167). As a further forum for engagement by local and regional governments in follow-up and review, the New Urban Agenda mentions the **World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments** (para. 169), which will meet at the Ninth session of the World Urban Forum in February 2018.

Questions that remain open with respect to these events, reports and platforms include:

- How can actors submit **inputs** to the implementation report?
- What **topics** will be covered in the report? How will **progress** be measured?
- What is the relationship between the **quadrennial report** and UN-Habitat's flagship **World Cities Report**?
- How will the **sessions of the World Urban Forum** contribute to follow-up and review?
- What is the role of the **World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments** in the follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda?
- How will the **HLPF** outcomes, in particular those from the 2018 focus on SDG 11, draw from the Ninth Session of the World Urban Forum in 2018 or contribute to subsequent sessions?

As the first implementation report is to be published in the first half of 2018, UN-Habitat is busy developing ideas for its structure and content. UN-Habitat plans to prepare a report of approximately 20 pages in length, which will outline the process by which future reports will be prepared and inputs collected. As implementation of the New Urban Agenda is still in the early stages, implementation progress will not feature strongly in the report. These ideas are to be further discussed over the coming months with a range of different actors.

Regional follow-up and review architecture

The regional level is not explicitly mentioned as a site for follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda. However, relevant regional organisations are invited to voluntarily provide inputs for the quadrennial implementation report (Res. 71/256, para. 166). Moreover, some regions have also started developing regional implementation plans and follow-up and review processes. For example, Box 3.3 illustrates how the Regional Action Plan for the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean supports follow-up and review at the regional level.

Box 3.3: Regional Action Plan for the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean

The Regional Action Plan (RAP) for the Implementation of the New Urban Agenda in Latin America and the Caribbean offers an interesting example of plans for a regional follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda. The Plan, whose preparation was led by the Forum of Ministers and High-Level Authorities on Housing and Urban Development of Latin America and the Caribbean (MINURVI), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and UN-Habitat, identifies synergies between the New Urban Agenda, 2030 Agenda, Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction, the Paris Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, and the Accelerated Action Modes for Small Island Developing States (Samoa Path) and proposes concrete implementation and follow-up and review measures.

The objectives and components outlined in the RAP provide clear guidance for the establishment of follow-up and review processes that address the urban dimension of the global agendas, provide appropriate opportunities to involve local governments and other local actors, and clearly define roles, responsibilities and timeframes for different steps in follow-up and review. The RAP also calls for the establishment of a regional observatory-platform to support monitoring, exchanges and peer learning amongst cities and governments in the region.

National and subnational follow-up and review architecture

The New Urban Agenda explicitly encourages local governments to develop, jointly with national and regional governments, local follow-up and review mechanisms and encourages consideration of relevant associations and appropriate platforms in that process (Res. 71/256, para. 163). Discussions on such follow-up and review architectures for the New Urban Agenda at national, regional and local levels are only just starting in many countries. Open questions regarding these national, regional and local follow-up and review processes that focus on all or some aspects of the New Urban Agenda include:

- How can the New Urban Agenda be reviewed at the **local level**? What activities, policies, and processes etc. will be reviewed? What indicators will be used?
- How can follow-up and review at the local level at the same time be **sensitive to local concerns and priorities**, and deliver outputs that can be aggregated at higher levels of government?
- What **synergies** exist with respect to follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda and other national and global agendas at the local level – bearing in mind that resources and capacities are limited, and that local and regional governments may already be engaging in follow-up and review processes for national or regional action plans?

Box. 3.3 illustrates how Chile has organised follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs at the national and subnational level.

Box 3.3: Chile's National Urban Development Council

Chile's National Urban Development Council (Consejo Nacional de Desarrollo Urbano - CNDU) is a multi-stakeholder consultative platform that was established to advise the national government on the implementation of the national urban development policy (Política Nacional de Desarrollo Urbano - PNDU). The CNDU has been active in proposing measures to support the implementation of the New Urban Agenda:

Firstly, the CNDU led the development of a monitoring system for cities (Sistema de indicadores y estándares de calidad de vida urbana), which will be approved by the national government in early 2018. It includes indicators that address not only the New Urban Agenda, but also the SDGs and the PNDU. The system was developed in partnership with relevant ministries and representatives from academia, local government, business, and civil society.

Secondly, the CNDU organises city forums (Foros de Ciudad) in different regions of Chile. These forums are organised in collaboration with subnational authorities and municipalities. 10 such forums have taken place thus far, and provide an opportunity to discuss the relevance of the New Urban Agenda for the local and regional level in Chile.

Thirdly, the PNDU – which was passed in 2013 – will be revised in early 2018. This will likely strengthen the relationship between the PNDU and the New Urban Agenda as well as the PNDU's focus on climate change, which is currently weak. To support this process, the CNDU has prepared a report on the current strengths and weaknesses of the PNDU.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships

Table 3.2 provides an overview of some multi-stakeholder partnerships and initiatives that support the follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda.

Table 3.2: Multi-stakeholder partnerships to support New Urban Agenda follow-up and review

Name	Level	Key actors	Description
Action Framework for Implementation of the New Urban Agenda (AFINUA)	International	UN-Habitat	The AFINUA sets out 35 essential ingredients for implementation of the New Urban Agenda. For each of these essential elements, it outlines who should be responsible for its implementation and how it should be monitored (UN-Habitat 2018b).
City Prosperity Initiative	International	UN-Habitat	Global index to measure urban prosperity across different dimensions (UN-Habitat 2017).
General Assembly of Partners (GAP)	International	The GAP is composed of 16 Partner Constituent Groups.	The GAP had an important role in the pre-Habitat III process. It is currently in a process of reorienting itself and its role in follow-up and review remains to be seen (GAP 2018).
Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments	International	Multiple local and regional government associations.	Among many other functions: Convenor of the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments, which is recognised as an actor to engage in follow-up and review (GTF 2018b).
Quito Implementation Platform (QIP)	International	UN-Habitat	The QIP is an online platform that gathers commitments to contribute that the implementation of the New Urban Agenda (Habitat III Secretariat 2018).

Fostering synergies with other agendas

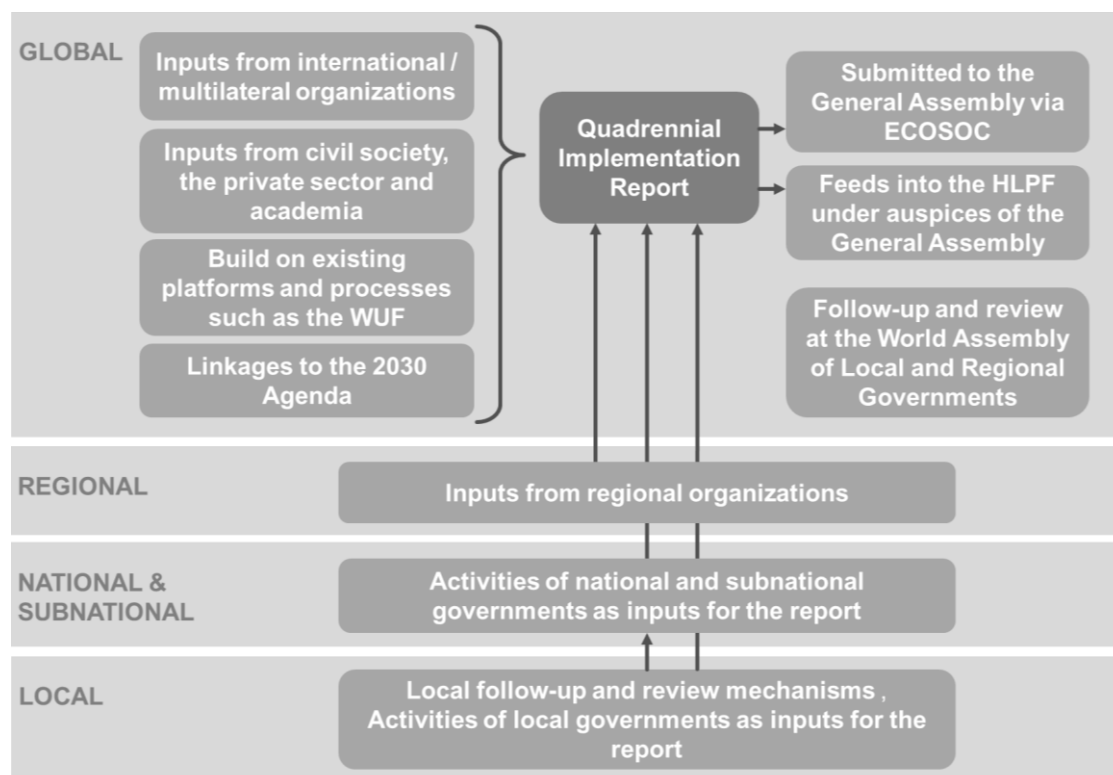
As indicated above, the New Urban Agenda establishes strong links to the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda at the global level, as its quadrennial implementation report is to be submitted to the HLPF under the auspices of the General Assembly. However, it remains to be seen what will happen with this implementation report once it has been fed into the HLPF. Will it be discussed during a special event at the HLPF? Will it form an input for the Thematic Review of SDG 11?

The relationship among the reporting for the New Urban Agenda and the other agendas is critical as the Agenda itself specifies that the implementation report will not just analyse progress made in the implementation of the New Urban Agenda, but also other internationally agreed goals and targets that are relevant to sustainable urbanisation and human settlements (Res. 71/256, para. 167). This implicit reference to the SDGs does not explicitly single out SDG 11, indicating that the report may take a broader view of all SDGs that may be relevant for sustainable urbanisation and human settlements. One might also consider interpreting this statement even more widely: to encompass the link between the New Urban Agenda and all other global agendas – such as the Paris Agreement – that contain goals that are relevant to urbanisation and human settlements.

More recent global processes have also proposed synergies with the New Urban Agenda. For example, in the field of disaster risk reduction, discussions have begun on the development of a **Global Risk Assessment Framework** to support UN Member States in implementing the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, assessing, identifying and estimating risks. The framework is supposed to ensure coherence across the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda (UNISDR 2017). An expert working group is to be created to support the development of this framework.

Another example is the **Mechelen Declaration on Cities and Migration** that was recently adopted at the Global Conference on Cities and Migration. The conference was intended as a contribution of local governments to the development of a Global Compact on Migration and to review progress on the implementation of migration-related commitments in the New Urban Agenda. The Declaration includes linkages to the SDGs, the New Urban Agenda and the New York Declaration on Migrants and Refugees. It moreover presents a monitoring and evaluation mechanism that is to “serve as the basis for the follow-up and review of the migration-related commitments included in the New Urban Agenda” (IISD 2017). The Mechelen Declaration identifies the Ninth Session of the World Urban Forum as the site for the first follow-up and review of the migration-related commitments included in the New Urban Agenda (para. 12). The Declaration moreover calls for the inclusion of “local dimensions within the Migration Governance Indicator, developed by the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) together with the Economist Intelligence Unit, and which reflects migration-related commitments of the Sustainable Development Goals and those of the New Urban Agenda” (para. 18).

Figure 3.2: Key elements of the New Urban Agenda follow-up and review



Lessons Learned

The inclusion of the **World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments** in the New Urban Agenda is a crucial step towards recognising local and regional governments as legitimate partners for follow-up and review. While the role of the World Assembly in follow-up and review still needs clarification, the New Urban Agenda recognises the relevance of local and regional governments for follow-up and review more clearly than the 2030 Agenda or the Paris Agreement. The World Assembly offers an important opportunity to demonstrate the added value of a stronger, formalised engagement of local and regional governments in these processes that goes beyond the current role allowed by the major group structure of the UN.

The submission of the **quadrennial implementation report** to the HLPF offers an opportunity to discuss progress on the New Urban Agenda in a **high-level context** and **raise global attention** to urban sustainability issues outside of the urban community. While the World Urban Forum is an event that brings together different urban stakeholder groups, the HLPF is a much broader forum – both thematically and in terms of participation. Discussing the quadrennial implementation report in this context can thus attune a broader audience to the relevance of considering urban sustainability issues as crosscutting issues for all SDGs.

Substantial efforts will be needed to ensure that the follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda **supports learning and partnerships**. The element of follow-up and review described in most detail in the New Urban Agenda – the quadrennial implementation report – is, on its own, insufficient to encourage learning. Such a report needs to be embedded in a process that allows actors to reflect on its messages and learn from them, otherwise its impact will remain limited (Dellas and Schreiber 2018).

Moreover, thus far efforts to put the New Urban Agenda into practice have not managed to stimulate substantial partnership efforts. For example, an online platform that was launched to register cooperative implementation commitments (the Quito Implementation Platform) thus far includes only 70 initiatives (Habitat III Secretariat 2018). It is also unclear how these initiatives will be monitored – will they have to submit reports demonstrating efforts to achieve their goals? What happens to initiatives that fail to submit such reports? If their listing on the Quito Implementation Platform remains despite a lack of demonstrated implementation efforts, this would undermine the credibility of the platform.

In comparison, more than 2100 partnerships have been registered to support the implementation of the SDGs – including 260 partnerships that intend to contribute to the implementation of SDG 11 (UN 2018b). Moreover, while the reporting system of the SDG Partnership Platform is far from perfect, the website clearly communicates whether (or not) the registered partnerships regularly submit progress reports. Of course, the latter platform is older, and more voluntary commitments for the New Urban Agenda may be registered after the Ninth session of the World Urban Forum in February 2018 and in the coming years. Nonetheless, even during the first few months the SDG platform had already registered several hundred commitments. Thus, it is important to reflect on the extent to which those elements mentioned in the New Urban Agenda, but whose role in follow-up and review remains unclear – such as the World Urban Forum – can contribute to the establishment of new partnerships to support implementation.

The **lack of clear targets and indicators** in the New Urban Agenda is both a risk and an opportunity in an increasingly complex global policy climate. It is a risk because we have to ask ourselves how, exactly, we will evaluate the extent to which the New Urban Agenda was

implemented when Habitat IV takes place in 2036. It is a risk because the New Urban Agenda contains diverse policy endorsements and it is not clear, without specified indicators, how to track and prioritise implementation. The lack of specificity thus means that governments (at all levels) can decide what they understand as “implementation of” and “progress on” the New Urban Agenda – which leaves the door open to watering down the commitments made in Quito. However, ambiguity may also be an opportunity because it allows governments at all levels to identify what they see as the most important messages in the New Urban Agenda for them to take action on, to take locally legitimate ownership of this process and to support place specific innovations. It is also an opportunity to identify ways in which monitoring of the New Urban Agenda and other global agendas can be complementary, thus reducing the extent of additional monitoring burdens managed through separate processes. For example, UN-Habitat has in recent years developed its City Prosperity Initiative - an index that measures prosperity in urban areas across various different dimensions - to contribute to the monitoring of the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs.

3.3 The Paris Agreement

While the Paris Agreement and the decision accompanying it (Decision 1/CP.21) make only few references to the role of local authorities, the prominence and engagement of local and regional governments in the climate negotiations has been increasing over the years. Most recently, at COP 23, more than 300 local and regional leaders adopted the **Bonn-Fiji Commitment of Local and Regional Leaders to Deliver the Paris Agreement at all Levels**, which highlights the commitments and actions of local and regional governments to reduce their emissions.

In general, the role of local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors in the follow-up and review of the Paris Agreement is far less defined than in the 2030 Agenda and the New Urban Agenda. They are not mentioned in the sections of the Paris Agreement or Decision 1/CP.21 on follow-up and review, although the Decision does welcome efforts by cities, subnational authorities and other non-Party stakeholders and encourages them to demonstrate these efforts by recording them in the Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action (Decision 1/CP.21, paras. 133-4). Nonetheless, as will be outlined below, there are opportunities for a stronger engagement of local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors in the follow-up and review of the Paris Agreement.

Global follow-up and review architecture

At the global level, the key elements of the review process of the Paris Agreement are the **enhanced transparency framework** (Art. 13), the **global stocktake** (Art. 14), and the **implementation and compliance review** (Art. 15).

In the context of the **enhanced transparency framework**, Parties submit national inventory reports as well as information necessary to track progress on the implementation and achievement of their NDCs (Art. 13, para. 7). For developed country Parties, it is moreover mandatory to provide information on support provided to developing country Parties (Art. 13, para. 9). All Parties may also provide information related to climate change impacts and adaptation (Art. 13, para. 8). Developing countries may also provide information on support received, as well as support provided (Art. 13, para. 9-10).

All Parties must submit this information at least every two years, with the exception of least developed country Parties and small island developing States, who may submit this information at their discretion (Decision 1/CP.21, para. 90). The information submitted will then be subject to a review by a technical expert team, as well as a facilitative, multilateral consideration of progress (FMCP) (Art. 13, para. 11).

While the Paris Agreement and the decision accompanying it thus outline the enhanced transparency framework, the exact modalities, procedures and guidelines are still to be decided. Dagnet et al. (2017) outline some of the key decisions and options that are still open, e.g.:

- How will the **technical expert reviews** take place? Will it involve centralised reviews (experts meet in Bonn), in-country reviews (experts travel to the country under review), and / or desk reviews conducted by the experts at home?
- What options will there be for **participation by non-Party stakeholders**, including e.g. local and regional governments? Can they meet with expert review teams during in-country visits, submit comments on the outputs of the review, etc.?
- How will the **experts** for the technical expert reviews be selected?
- What will be the **output** of the technical expert reviews?
- What will be the **timing** of submissions for the technical expert review – will all countries submit their reports at the same time, or will submissions be staggered?
- Member states will be able to participate in the FMCP to ask questions and learn from each other. However, in the past not all states have made use of this opportunity as it is **very time and resource intensive**, leading to limited participation by smaller delegations. How can engagement by all Parties be facilitated?
- Will non-Party stakeholders – including local and regional governments - be allowed to participate, in the **FMCP** at all, and how? E.g. observer status, ability to submit written and oral questions, etc.
- What will be the outputs of the FMCP?
- How will the technical expert review and the FMCP **build upon each other**? How will they link to the global stocktake and the mechanism to facilitate implementation and compliance?

The **global stocktake** is intended as a periodical assessment of the collective progress towards achieving the purpose of the Paris Agreement and its long-term goals. The first such stocktake will take place in 2023 and then every five years thereafter (Art. 14, para. 2). Its goal is to support Parties in updating and enhancing their actions and support, as well as enhancing international cooperation for climate action (para. 3). Open questions with respect to the global stocktake include:

- What will be the inputs for the global stocktake? Decision 1/CP.21 (para. 99) suggests several inputs (e.g. information on the overall effect of NDCs, state of adaptation efforts, support, experiences and priorities, mobilisation and provision of support, IPCC reports, reports from subsidiary bodies), but implies that additional inputs may also be considered.
- How will the global stocktake take place? E.g. multilateral considerations, online platforms, etc.

- What opportunities will there be for participation and inputs by non-Party stakeholders – including local and regional governments? E.g. submission of reports to be considered, observer status, ability to submit written and oral questions, etc.
- What will be the outputs of the global stocktake?

The last key component of the review process of the Paris Agreement is the **mechanism to facilitate implementation of and promote compliance with the provisions** of the Paris Agreement. The mechanism consists of an expert-based committee, and will function in a manner that is transparent, non-adversarial and non-punitive. Its 12 members are to be selected based on equitable geographic representation, gender balance and competence in relevant scientific, technical, socioeconomic or legal fields (Decision 1/CP.21, para. 102). Key questions that remain open with respect to the mechanism include:

- What inputs will be considered by the committee?
- How can the compliance mechanism be triggered?
- How will the mechanism be linked to the transparency framework and the global stocktake?
- How will national follow-up efforts to address issues raised by the committee be tracked?
- What opportunities will there be for inputs by non-Party stakeholders – including local and regional governments?

As the first global stocktake will take place only in 2023, a **facilitative dialogue** will take place in 2018 to take stock of collective efforts in relation to progress towards the long-term goal of the Paris Agreement and to inform the process of developing the next round of NDCs (Decision 1/CP.21, para. 20).⁶ This facilitative dialogue has become known as the **Talanoa Dialogue**, after a Pacific storytelling tradition that is focused on inclusive, participatory and transparent dialogue, and building empathy and trust (FCCC/CP/2017/L.13, Annex II). The Talanoa Dialogue commenced in January 2018 with a preparatory phase, and will conclude at COP 24 in November 2018 with a political phase. It is open to analytical and policy relevant inputs by Parties, stakeholders and expert institutions.⁷ Moreover, both Parties and non-Party stakeholders “are invited to cooperate in convening local, national, regional or global events in support of the dialogue and to prepare and make available relevant inputs” (ibid.). Thus, it offers clear opportunities for inputs and participation by local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors. The Talanoa Dialogue is moreover seen by many as a model for the global stocktake (ENB 2017b: 31). It however lacks any mandate to look specifically at urban or spatial issues (the assumption being that wide participation will substitute or encompass local concerns).

To ensure adequate consideration of action and support in the pre-2020 period, Decision FCCC/CP/2017/L.13 moreover establishes two stocktakes at COP 24 and COP 25. These stocktakes will inter alia consider the work of the Marrakech Partnership for Global Climate Action, including the summaries for policymakers of the technical examination processes

⁶ Parties whose NDCs contain a time frame up to 2025 are requested to communicate by 2020 a new NDC, and Parties whose NDC contains a time frame up to 2030 are requested to communicate or update their contributions by 2020 (Decision 1/CP.21, paras. 23, 24).

⁷ Parties, stakeholders and expert institutions are invited to submit inputs by 2 April 2018 for consideration in discussions in conjunction with the May session in Bonn, and by 29 October 2018 for discussions in conjunction with COP 24 (Decision FCCC/CP/2017/L.13, Annex II).

and the yearbooks on climate action prepared by the high-level champions (Decision FCCC/CP/2017/L.13, para. 17b, para. 18e).

National and subnational follow-up and review architecture

While the Paris Agreement is silent on the issue of national and subnational reviews, it is evident that the various inputs Parties will have to provide for the global review processes outlined above require preparatory processes at the (sub-)national level. Countries are starting to develop or adapt such processes to provide for stronger linkages across different levels of government. One example is Chile (see Box 3.3).

Box 3.3: Chile's Regional Climate Change Committees

Chile has begun developing action plans to implement its NDC. Currently, there is one plan with a particularly strong focus on urban issues: the Climate Change Adaptation Plan for Cities that was developed with the support of public consultations throughout 2017, and is scheduled to be approved in early 2018. Two more sectoral adaptation plans also have a strong urban dimension: the Adaptation Plan for the Energy Sector (available in 2018) and the Adaptation Plan for Infrastructure (approved in 2017).

At the national level, the implementation of these three adaptation plans will be reported on an annual basis by an Interministerial Technical Team for Climate Change (Equipo Técnico Interministerial de Cambio Climático – ETICC), with the report being submitted to the Minister of the Environment. While involvement of subnational governments in the reporting, review and follow-up of national climate action plans has been limited thus far, it is expected that in the future the recently established Regional Climate Change Committees (Comité Regional de Cambio Climático – CORECC) will lead to a more active involvement of subnational and local governments in such processes. The CORECC are chaired by the head of the regional government, and include representatives from local governments, business, academia, etc.

With the CORECC being a relatively novel development, processes and procedures are still being established. Thus, a key challenge going forward will be identifying ways and means for the CORECC to ensure that reports and results of reviews conducted at the regional level feed into the national level (ETICC) so that coordination and cooperation across levels of government is supported.

Multi-stakeholder partnerships

Table 3.3 provides an overview of some multi-stakeholder partnerships and initiatives that support the follow-up and review of the Paris Agreement. Numerous platforms exist that help cities report their GHG reduction commitments and GHG emissions, e.g. the **carbonn Climate Registry (cCR)** and the **Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action (NAZCA)**. 1019 local and regional governments from 86 countries have reported their emissions reduction targets to the carbonn Climate Registry. Almost 7500 local governments have committed to the **Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy**, which encourages committed local and regional governments to take GHG inventories, develop targets and create action plans for their implementation.

Moreover, more than 2500 local government initiatives are registered in NAZCA, which aggregates commitments listed in various other reporting platforms, such as carbon_n and the EU Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy.

The current scope of these platforms is limited, with each covering less than 10% of the global population with significant overlap between the reporting platforms being likely. Moreover, as mentioned earlier there are substantial imbalances in the reporting to platforms such as NAZCA across different continents. This indicates that data availability is not only overall still rather limited, but moreover particularly lacking in certain regions.

The data currently reported in these platforms is also subject to shortcomings with respect to comparability and the extent to which it can be aggregated. Hsu et al. (2016) outline the inconsistent metrics used in NAZCA that are problematic in this respect – for example the different definitions of urban and regional boundaries that are used by reporting entities, and different reference points, time frames, and methodological assumptions. The different nature of the data reported in the platforms is certainly also not conducive to comparability – local governments may report GHG inventories, GHG reduction targets, action plans and/or other data. The **Global Protocol for Community-Scale Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventories (GPC)** is a key initiative addressing these concerns, as it adapts IPCC guidance for national GHG inventory preparation for the community scale. It is used by many cities around the world, such as Belo Horizonte (Brazil), Chengdu (China), Rajkot (India) and Boulder (USA). Moreover, **the Initiative for Climate Action Transparency** is developing **Non-State and Subnational Action Guidance** to support interested countries in integrating the GHG emissions and reductions of non-state actors and subnational actors (including cities) in national inventories and NDCs.

Table 3.3: Initiatives to support Paris Agreement follow-up and review

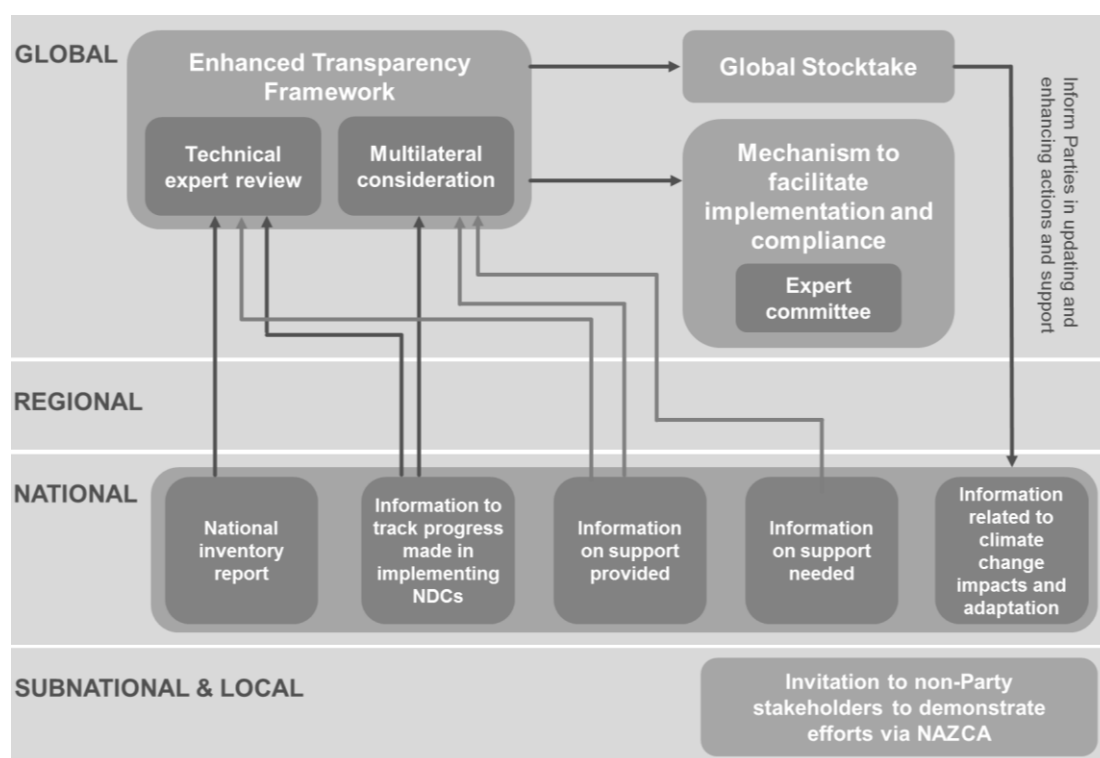
Name	Level	Key actors	Description
Capacity-building Initiative for Transparency	International	Global Environment Facility	Initiative launched in Decision 1/CP.21, para. 84 to help developing countries meet the enhanced transparency requirements of the Paris Agreement.
carbonn Climate Registry (cCR)	International	ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability.	Platform where cities can report their GHG reduction commitments and GHG emissions (carbonn 2018).
Global Protocol for Community-Scale Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventories (GPC)	International	World Resource Institute, C40 Cities, ICLEI-Local Governments for Sustainability.	Protocol that adapts IPCC guidance for national GHG inventory preparation for the community scale (Greenhouse Gas Protocol 2018).
Initiative for Climate Action Transparency	International	German Federal Environment Ministry, Children's Investment Fund Foundation, Italian Environment Ministry, ClimateWorks Foundation, United Nations Office for Project Services.	This initiative provides guidance and capacity building support for measurement, reporting and verification (MRV) of climate policies and actions. This includes Non-State and Subnational Action Guidance to help integrate the impacts of such actors into national GHG emission projections (ICAT 2016).
International Partnership for Transparency in the Paris Agreement	International	South Africa, South Korea and Germany.	A partnership that focuses on exchanges amongst countries on implementation and the enhanced transparency framework of the Paris Agreement (GIZ 2017).
NDC Platform	International	World Bank.	Comprehensive mapping of NDCs, including information on issues such as targets, implementation plans, and cost estimates (World Bank 2016).
Non-State Actor Zone for Climate Action (NAZCA)	International	UNFCCC, CDP, cCR, The Climate Group, the Investors on Climate Change, UN Global Compact, Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy, Climate Bonds.	Platform where cities, subnational regions and other stakeholders can report their GHG reduction commitments and GHG emissions (NAZCA 2018).

Fostering synergies with other agendas

Neither the Paris Agreement nor the decision accompanying it (Decision 1/CP.21) include any formal reference linking the follow-up and review of that agreement to the 2030 Agenda or the New Urban Agenda. However, as mentioned earlier, UN member states have nevertheless been engaging in discussions on synergies in the implementation of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda in particular. Moreover, synergies between these two agendas have also received substantial attention from the research community.

For example, both the NDC-SDG Linkages tool on the Climate Watch platform and the NDC-SDG Connections tool by the German Development Institute and the Stockholm Environment Institute map the alignment between countries' NDCs and the SDG targets (Climate Watch 2017, DIE and SEI 2017).

Figure 3.3: Key elements of the Paris Agreement follow-up and review



Lessons Learned

While there is **no formal recognition** of local and regional governments as legitimate partners in follow-up and review in the Paris Agreement, there are opportunities to strengthen their role. This is because the formal elements of the Paris Agreement review process – the transparency framework, global stocktake, and implementation and compliance review mechanism – are still being fleshed out. There are opportunities to ensure that non-Party stakeholders (including local and regional governments) can participate in these processes. At the same time, the further development of follow-up and review structures for the Paris Agreement (as well as the other two agendas) will likely be subject to contestation. There are issues of process, power, content and method in working out the details of follow-up and review. There is thus a risk that structures agreed at the international level will reflect the lowest common denominator of the UN member states; that opportunities for the involvement of subnational and non-state actors are limited for political reasons; that there is no mandate to track urban issues or dynamics; and that there is inadequate attention to the integrity and quality of the reporting that does take place.

The **2018 Talanoa Dialogue** is an important opportunity for local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors to contribute to the stocktaking on collective efforts to implement the Paris Agreement. The Talanoa Dialogue is open to inputs from local and regional governments, who can moreover participate in events at the local, national, regional

and global level to support the dialogue. To facilitate participation by local and regional governments and their partners in the Talanoa Dialogue, ICLEI has recently announced that it will be organising a series of Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues. The idea is to bring actors from different levels of governance together to discuss how local and regional governments can contribute to the implementation of NDCs, mobilise the necessary resources, and raise ambition (ICLEI 2018). The information collected during these Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues will be consolidated and submitted to the UNFCCC and discussed at the Climate Summit of Local and Regional Leaders at COP 24 (ibid.).

The current situation with respect to **availability of data** on local climate action that is comparable and can be aggregated is suboptimal. While there are many platforms that encourage reporting by local and regional governments, these platforms currently suffer from several limitations. These include a limited geographic scope and data comparability shortcomings. However, efforts are underway to improve this situation. Increasingly more reporting platforms are encouraging local and regional governments to report emissions inventories in a manner that is consistent with IPCC guidelines, which would ensure that local data can be aggregated and is consistent with data collected at the national level. For example, carbonn recommends that reporting entities use the **Global Protocol for Community-Scale Greenhouse Gas Emissions Inventories**. The Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy will also begin requiring local governments to take inventories using an IPCC-based global standard for emissions inventory reporting starting in 2018. National inventory programs for city-scale GHG emissions are also an important step in the right direction, as they ensure collection of comparable data at the local level.

At the international level, the issue of data from non-Party stakeholders came up at COP 23. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, supported by several other countries, “called for a new agenda item on enabling greater ambition by measuring, reporting, verifying, and accounting for non-party stakeholders’ contributions to emissions reductions” (ENB 2017b: 31). Discussions on this topic ultimately did not move forward, and thus coordinated efforts at the international level to support local data collection remain a pending issue.

The lack of comparable data is a key barrier to demonstrating the **contribution of subnational climate action** to the achievement of national and international climate targets. The data deficiencies outlined above explain why it is currently not possible to accurately estimate the overlap (or additionality) of national governments and non-Party stakeholders such as local and regional governments. For example, Roelfsma et al. (2018) calculate that the potential overlap between initiatives by non-Party stakeholders – including local governments - and NDCs could be as high as 70% in 2020 and 80% in 2030. However, other studies assume a much more limited overlap between NDCs and pledges of non-Party stakeholders (UNEP 2015). Höhne et al. (2016) point out that gaps in data availability mean that such assessments will remain indicative for the foreseeable future.

4 Conclusions and Recommendations

Despite references to cities in the three landmark global agendas discussed in this report, **sustainable urban development is not yet the global priority that it should be**. Current institutional, political and financial frameworks do not address the scale and time pressure of the “massive sustainability challenges” related to “housing, infrastructure, basic services, food security, health, education, decent jobs, and natural resources, among others” facing cities worldwide in the coming decades (Res. 71/256, para. 2). The sheer scale and complexity of such global urban challenges implies that any efforts to address them must draw on a vast range of expert information and acknowledge diverse concerns. Strong follow-up and review processes can help strengthen consideration and prioritisation of urban sustainability challenges. However, in developing recommendations for such strong follow-up and review processes, there is a risk in exclusively advocating for “quick fixes” that can be easily implemented but that are on their own insufficient. There is also a risk in presenting recommendations that offer an encompassing reform programme but that, as a whole, may be difficult for UN member states to agree to.

Thus, efforts to support the **follow-up and review of urban sustainability issues need to focus both on the short and long-term**. In the short term, supporting local and regional governments to develop or strengthen their own synergistic follow-up and review processes for the global agendas may be a low hanging fruit to the extent that it is in the direct control of subnational governments. Moreover, there is an urgent need to focus on achieving progress on those issues that are on the agenda in the next two years – such as the Thematic Review of SDG 11 in 2018 and decisions on the further development of the enhanced transparency framework, global stocktake and mechanism to facilitate implementation and compliance with the Paris Agreement. At the same time, the foundations for changes which can only be implemented over a longer timeframe – such as improvements in the availability, quality, and comparability of disaggregated data – must also be built now to ensure that better data is available for the next editions of relevant reports such as the quadrennial implementation report of the New Urban Agenda.

Ensuring that local and regional governments are able to effectively engage the global community demands **global leaders** who are committed to promoting the role of cities. Such leadership can moreover help motivate and incentivise local and regional governments to participate in follow-up and review. Leadership is required from governments at different levels, the UN system, civil society, academia, and others. The Cities Alliance Joint Work Programme on Cities in the Global Agendas has demonstrated its strength with respect to global advocacy on urban sustainability issues, supporting stakeholder engagement in urban events, and promoting dialogue amongst governments and stakeholders. It is therefore well placed to promote and support efforts to strengthen attention to the urban dimension of global agendas during follow-up and review. Others have also demonstrated a strong commitment to supporting follow-up and review. For example, academics have been calling for a dedicated science-policy interface on global urban questions. Associations such as UCLG, ICLEI and the GTF have been advocating for local and regional governments in follow-up and review, and highlighting the importance of devolution in achieving the SDGs.

Against this background, we **draw conclusions and provide recommendations** on the synergistic follow-up and review of the urban dimension of the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda on the following pages. These recommendations are organised around the five narratives outlined in chapter 2, with a particular focus on the need

to strengthen synergies in follow-up and review. They moreover address the subnational, national, regional and international level, as well as all relevant actors.

The ambitious recommendations set out below fit well within the existing follow-up and review architectures and although demanding, **are realistic**. It is nonetheless important to acknowledge the political challenges associated with the implementation of such recommendations. Some examples illustrate the power struggles and distributional conflicts that may lie ahead. For example, during the Habitat III process, there was protracted contestation amongst national governments over whether, and how, other stakeholders would be able to participate in the negotiations. More broadly, the “shrinking space” debate highlights the worrisome trend towards placing restrictions on civil society engagement around the world, a climate that makes it hard to argue for an expanded profile in international processes, even for local and regional governments. Competent process management and moderation will be necessary to bring actors with different interests to the same table and discuss measures to achieve more inclusive follow-up and review processes at the global, regional, national, and subnational level.

4.1 Recognising local and regional governments as legitimate and necessary partners

Participation by local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors in follow-up and review at all levels must be strengthened. As important implementation actors, it is essential that their voices are heard, their implementation potential is fully enabled and their data collection efforts feed into the more formal national and global assessments of progress and efforts to identify good practices. This is equally relevant for the 2030 Agenda, the Paris Agreement and the New Urban Agenda.

The opportunities for participation that do exist should be used more effectively. For example, to date, participation by local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors in the global Thematic Reviews of the SDGs at the HLPF has been limited, despite the intended inclusiveness of this forum. A lack of awareness of the relevance of the HLPF and/or lack of resources to engage in it are possible reasons for this. Moreover, the fact that urban sustainability issues are dispersed across multiple agendas further dissipates urban expertise and may hinder the effective use of existing opportunities for participation.

At the national level, research shows that few countries have strong, formalised platforms for involving local and regional governments in the preparation of VNRs for the HLPF (UCLG 2017). With respect to the Paris Agreement, references to urban issues in NDCs prepared are also limited and hence there is a risk that actors working on urban issues will play a limited role in the preparation for the review of NDC implementation.

While improving engagement is thus a crucial issue, it is also important to ask who is best placed to represent urban issues, and in which events. Time and resources are limited, and the number of events in which a single local or regional government could potentially be involved in for the follow-up and review of different agendas is large. Against this background, we propose the following recommendations to strengthen participation in follow-up and review:

- Use the **Thematic Review of SDG 11** in 2018 to **mobilise and involve** local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors. The Thematic Reviews thus far have primarily attracted delegates who are general development practitioners or SDG experts. The quality of the Thematic Reviews would benefit if the participation of representatives of local and regional governments, urban planners and other representatives of the built environment professions, the urban knowledge community, as well as other relevant stakeholder groups can also be secured. Such stakeholder groups should be encouraged to participate through relevant, legitimate institutions that can aggregate their positions, such as the Global Taskforce and the Major Groups and Other Stakeholders.
- Recognise the opportunity offered by the **Local and Regional Authorities Forum** that is planned for by UNDESA and others during the 2018 HLPF. This forum can help raise awareness on the efforts of local and regional governments to localise the SDGs. Its impact can be increased by ensuring that it is attended not only by representatives of local and regional governments, but also e.g. national ministries, UN institutions, civil society, business and academia. Moreover, the Local and Regional Governments Forum should be institutionalised, such that even in those years when SDG 11 is not reviewed a smaller task team is mandated to highlight the urban dimensions of those SDGs that are subject to an in-depth review at the HLPF in a given year. They could be given a reserved spot for a side-event during each HLPF to present relevant results and inputs.
- Provide opportunities for local and regional governments to participate in the **enhanced transparency framework, the global stocktake and the mechanism to facilitate implementation and compliance** of the Paris Agreement. These opportunities will be dependent on the format that is eventually decided for each of these processes and for the processes when taken as a whole. Examples include: opportunities to meet with expert teams in case in-country reviews are part of the technical expert reviews of the transparency framework, and the right to observe and submit written and oral questions during the facilitative, multilateral consideration of progress and the global stocktake (Dagnet et al. 2017). Moreover, local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors should use the opportunity to participate in the 2018 Talanoa Dialogue – for example by participating in national Talanoa Dialogues where possible, or participating in the Cities and Regions Talanoa Dialogues that are being organised by ICLEI.
- Define a clear role for the **World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments** in the follow-up and review of the New Urban Agenda. The World Assembly offers an important opportunity to demonstrate the added value of a stronger, formalised engagement of local and regional governments in follow-up and review. The World Assembly envisions a role for itself as a dialogue interface between national governments, UN institutions and other international partners, and local and regional governments. One example of how this can be achieved is by discussing joint inputs and messages at the World Assembly that can feed into the quadrennial implementation report of the New Urban Agenda. The World Assembly could moreover raise awareness amongst attendees on the importance of engagement in the follow-up and review processes of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda. It would be a fitting venue to discuss joint inputs by local and regional governments for the HLPF and the global stocktake.

- Promote the stakeholder roundtables at the **World Urban Forum** as opportunities to involve different actors in follow-up and review. Stakeholder groups should establish preparatory processes that allow them to gather and analyse inputs from their respective constituencies in advance of the WUF. In collaboration with UN-Habitat, they should identify the most suitable format for these inputs for inclusion in the quadrennial implementation report.

4.2 Accounting for local implementation efforts to adequately evaluate progress

Adequate, disaggregated data is essential for an evidence-based assessment of progress at the local level across all three agendas. However, initiatives to increase data availability on urban sustainability issues are highly fragmented and geographically uneven. For example, the many efforts to report and quantify local climate action are not always in a comparable format or using methods that allow for accurate and reliable agglomeration. Consequently, there is a lack of consistent, reliable data on how (and how much) the local level is contributing to meeting national and international climate targets. In many countries, such data gaps are compounded by limited capacities amongst research institutions and statistical offices.

Reports have an essential function in **communicating progress** and calling attention to key challenges and successes. There are multiple reports and other inputs that are part of the formal follow-up and review process of each of the agendas. Moreover, local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors may be invited to submit their own reports or comments to multiple formal follow-up and review processes. The multiplicity of reports raises questions regarding the best strategies for compiling, structuring and including local and urban perspectives and data.

- Efforts to **harmonise the indicators and methodologies** used to collect data on the activities of local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors should be supported and scaled up. There are a number of examples of such efforts, including the OECD Territorial Reviews, the UCLG Gold Report and the Global Protocol for Community-Scale Greenhouse Gas Emission Inventories. For such efforts to have a more significant impact, collaboration with the national level is essential to encourage more widespread adoption of the same indicators and methodologies and ensuring their coherence with national and global data protocols. Moreover, it is essential that relevant data is (territorially) disaggregated. This is a challenge for many contexts, but especially for low and middle-income places. These are global sustainable development hot spots, where the situation is not only changing rapidly but the underlying data management systems and capacity are challenged, making robust locally nuanced monitoring less reliable.
- Encourage local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors to make use of **existing opportunities** to submit reports to global follow-up and review processes. These include the Talanoa Dialogue, the HLPF, and the quadrennial implementation report. There are multiple possible ways of doing this. For example, local and regional governments could consider collaborating – with the help of relevant associations of subnational governments – on preparing a single urban sustainability report with strong individual sections on different global sustainability agendas. Such a report would reduce the resource intensity of report preparation

(compared to preparing individual inputs for each reporting opportunity), but also allow for high-quality, targeted inputs for each of the processes. It would also facilitate a strong focus on synergies by exploring the contribution of local and regional governments to the implementation of all three agendas in one report.

4.3 Supporting local implementation capacities

Follow-up and review processes that consider urban sustainability issues are essential to ensure that **national financial, legal and institutional frameworks** are conducive to implementation of all three agendas at the local level. For example, if urban sustainability issues are discussed during a country's VNR at the HLPF, it is essential that there are appropriate processes in place to ensure that any recommendations and lessons learned are considered at the national level in an inclusive manner.

- Encourage national governments to develop workflows with **clear timelines and responsibilities for the revision of national sustainability strategies**, national urban policies, and national climate change policies. These should be aligned with the relevant review processes at the global level, to ensure that recommendations and lessons learned are integrated in a timely manner. Moreover, in revising their national strategies and policies to improve the implementation of the (urban dimension of the) three agendas, national governments should be sensitive to synergies and interactions amongst them.
- **Institutionalise the engagement** of local and regional governments and relevant local actors as key players in such national revision processes. This would provide a regular feedback mechanism regarding the local impact of national legal and policy frameworks. It would also improve the inclusiveness of the revision of national policies to follow-up from global review processes. The way such engagement takes place will differ depending on existing platforms and processes in different countries and must take heed of the very varied capacities of municipalities. However, in any case engagement processes that involve in-person meetings between different actor groups (e.g. during national sustainable development forums) are preferable to (exclusively) virtual engagement opportunities (e.g. commenting on drafts of revised policies). Moreover, any engagement opportunities must be communicated widely to ensure that relevant constituencies are aware of them and have sufficient time to prepare and coordinate their inputs.
- Use follow-up and review processes to **explicate needs and find suitable support**. The national reports and reviews as well as the Thematic Reviews at the HLPF should cover not only progress but also problems and obstacles to implementation. To identify appropriate support measures, it is crucial to evaluate where local actors need international assistance in terms of finance, technology, legal or policy advice, organisational development, partnerships, or other forms of capacity building. Such a matchmaking process should involve the UN system and its regional and country-level support structures, all relevant donors and funders, complemented also by capable and reliable private actors (e.g. philanthropy, business, civil society, science). Such an improved access to resources for implementation or advantageous partnerships might also incentivise local actors to increase their efforts to participate in follow-up and review.

4.4 Learning for sustainable urban development

Regional events, local and regional government networks and multi-stakeholder platforms are important for learning on urban issues and should thus be supported. The best data collection efforts and reports are of limited value if they are not embedded in processes of collective evaluation and the associated opportunities for peer learning. Both directly and indirectly the summative process of preparing and comparing progress in large scale reporting on global agendas acts as an opportunity for local and regional government practitioners and leaders to come together for reflection, stimulating revision of practice. Such efforts to support collective learning ensure that it is not just the global development community that discusses challenges and opportunities of Paris, the New Urban Agenda and the SDGs, but also those actors that can affect change at different levels. Issue-specific formats that target specific actor groups are likely to allow for more in-depth exchanges than at global events such as the HLPF. Considering the different stakeholder groups that would benefit from learning initiatives – including, but not limited to, national governments, local and regional governments, traditional authorities and land managers, banks, the built environment professions, UN institutions, civil society organisations and philanthropies – it is likely that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to learning.

- Use **regional follow-up and review**, supported by the UN regional commissions, as an opportunity for peer learning amongst UN member states and other stakeholders. In the context of the UN Secretary-General's reform plans, the regional commissions are envisaged as regional think tanks to bring about integrated policy advice and as platforms for deliberation and consensus-building that feed into global forums. For this to be effective, the regional commissions need to closely collaborate with other regional forums. For example, the regional observatory-platform for Latin America and the Caribbean that was proposed in the Regional Action Plan for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda is intended as a means to monitor progress, exchange experiences, and promote peer learning. Due to the Regional Action Plan's synergistic approach the regional observatory-platform could be a space of learning on the urban dimension of all of the agendas mentioned in the Plan. Results could then be fed into ECLAC's Forum on Sustainable Development that serves as the regional mechanism to follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and SDGs.
- Encourage collaboration with and among **local and regional government networks** to adjust and scale up their existing learning initiatives to support implementation of the three agendas. These networks have long and successful trajectories in enabling peer learning. If such learning activities are expanded to further the implementation of the three agendas, they would offer additional useful opportunities for local and regional governments to engage directly with each other and learn from the good practices of peers in similar situations.
- Build critical reflective capacity in the **urban research community** and train the next generation of urban scholars in the methods and issues associated with follow-up and review. To date the urban scholarly community has been only tangentially engaged in the global policy shifts and there is significant scope to scale up the academic role in realising the various global agendas.
- Identify how the **World Urban Forum** can make a strong contribution to learning. While the WUF was given a role in the follow-up and review of the New Urban

Agenda, what exactly this means remains unclear. With respect to the Ninth session of the World Urban Forum in February 2018, the expectation evidently appears to be that this will be a bottom-up process – the various side, networking and training events will strengthen partnerships and learning for the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. However, the usual structure of such events – where a range of panellists each have 5-10 minutes to make a statement, followed by (more or less) interactive discussion with the audience is not ideal to support learning. A more useful approach would be to focus in-depth on specific cases, for example a specific project implemented in a city. What was the original situation? What was done to ameliorate it? What was the process of getting there? This should be discussed in a manner that is relatable to the targeted actor group. A strong focus on interaction that enables participants to reflect on and discuss their own experiences in a meaningful manner is also helpful.

4.5 Partnerships for sustainable urban development

Multi-stakeholder partnerships can improve **inclusiveness** and mobilise additional **resources, skills** and **knowledge** to implement the urban dimension of all three agendas. The many partnerships and other cooperative initiatives focusing on urban sustainability issues that have registered in NAZCA, the Quito Implementation Platform and the Partnerships for the SDGs registry suggest that much is already happening in this respect. However, whether all partnerships have the resources to make substantial contributions to implementation remains to be seen. For example, of the 70 initiatives registered on the Quito Implementation Platform, only 23 have more than 1 million USD in financial resources available to them. Catalysing the development of high quality partnerships on urban sustainability issues will require efforts to ensure learning from their successes and challenges, as well as suitable accountability measures.

- Consider launching an **urban data partnership** to identify data gaps at the local and regional level, and ways to address them. Such a partnership could be launched under the umbrella of existing initiatives, such as the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data. It should identify relevant indicators that exist but are not yet used, as well as indicators that may still need to be developed. It could moreover develop guidelines and other support material for local and regional governments that wish to improve monitoring of urban sustainability issues.
- **Evaluate the activities of partnerships** and other initiatives that self-register in the existing global registries/platforms. For example, initiatives that register on the Partnerships for the SDGs platform are encouraged to regularly submit progress reports. These reports, as well as ones submitted by initiatives registered in the Quito Implementation Platform and NAZCA, can strengthen the evidence base of follow-up and review especially when it is analysed how and what partnerships are contributing.

4.6 Synergies across the three agendas

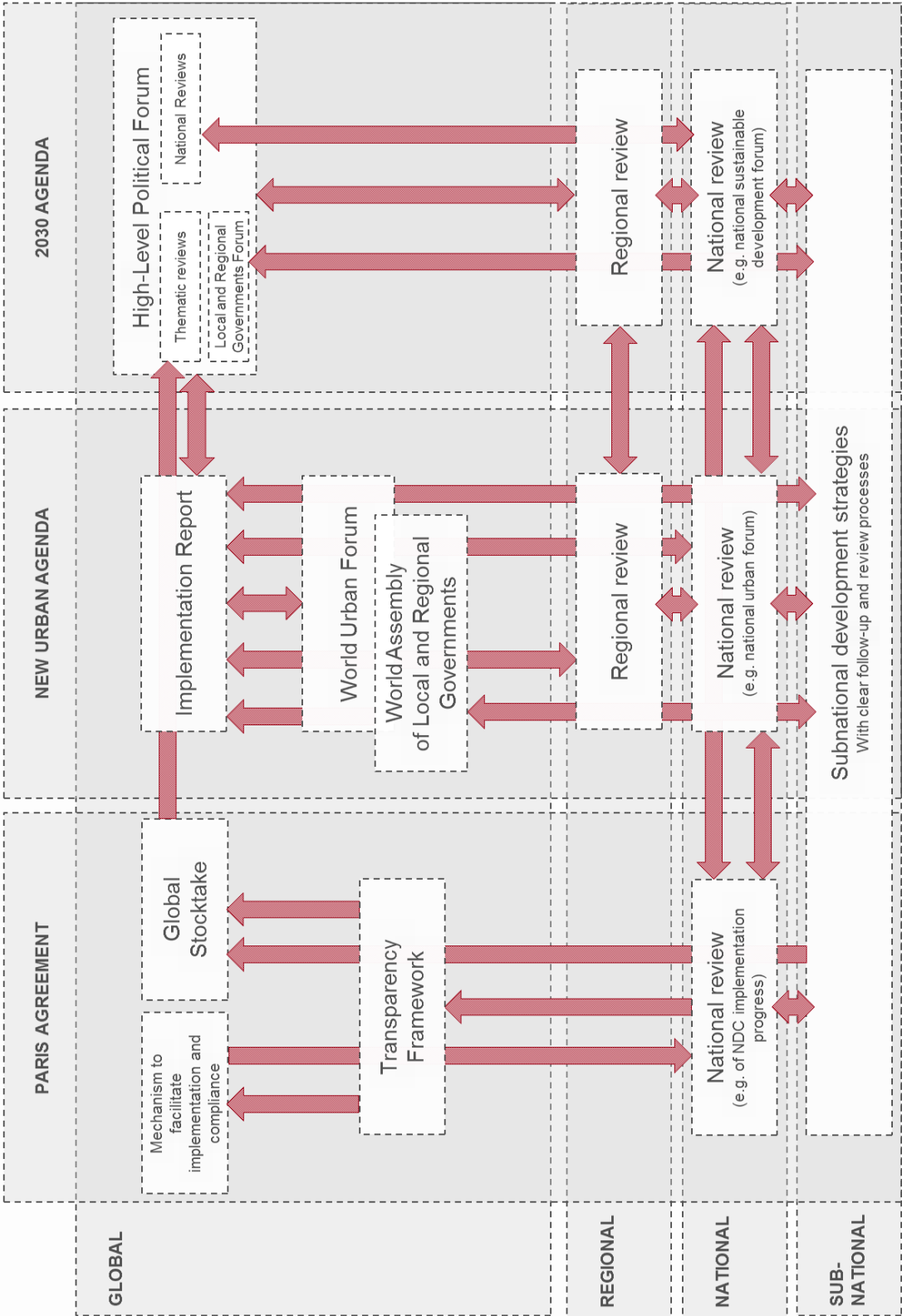
Strengthening **synergies** in follow-up and review across the three agendas is important due to **resource and time constraints** and to ascertain that **interconnections are considered**. Recommendations to realise such synergies are thus a key priority of this report. They are therefore also important for many of the recommendations outlined above. For example, while the scope for adjusting the global follow-up and review architectures of the three agendas to more strongly emphasise synergies is limited, strengthening the participation of local and regional governments, local actors and global urban actors in the established forums, platforms and other processes can make an important contribution to harnessing synergies. This is because these actors will be able to emphasise the connections across the three agendas, and promote the discussion of urban sustainability issues.

- Consider addressing synergies across all three agendas in the quadrennial **New Urban Agenda implementation report**. The New Urban Agenda mentions that its implementation report should address not only the New Urban Agenda itself, but also other internationally agreed goals and targets relevant to sustainable urbanisation and human settlements. This is an opportunity to highlight that not only the 2030 Agenda, but also the Paris Agreement and other UN agendas, such as the Sendai Framework for Disaster Reduction and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, are relevant to sustainable urbanisation and human settlements.
- Emphasise synergies and interlinkages across SDGs and agendas during the **Thematic Reviews** at the HLPF. Integrated workflows are essential to best prepare the Thematic Reviews. The background material for the Thematic Reviews should draw on existing reports from various sources and synthesise the findings. In general, the analysis should go beyond merely highlighting that a particular SDG is connected to other SDGs (as is done in many of the background notes prepared thus far), towards identifying specific manners in which SDGs and/or agendas reinforce or undermine each other. Moreover, the background material for a particular SDG should consider lessons learned from earlier Thematic Reviews. With respect to the Thematic Review of SDG 11, synergies and interlinkages should be strengthened by reflecting on the New Urban Agenda implementation report during the Thematic Review. This is relevant because, while SDG 11 outlines key targets for cities and human settlements, the New Urban Agenda addresses the legal and policy frameworks needed to implement them. Thus, discussing the two agendas in tandem can help move the discussions from the currently very abstract nature of the Thematic Reviews, towards a discussion on concrete, useable policy guidance. Moreover, as the first New Urban Agenda implementation report will likely only be available after the Ninth session of the World Urban Forum in February 2018, the HLPF in July 2018 is the next appropriate occasion for discussion of the report.
- National governments should directly and explicitly address urban sustainability issues and synergies between the three agendas in all relevant **national reports** and inputs for global follow-up and review processes. The relevant reporting guidelines should be updated to encourage this. In the case of the VNRs, UNDESA has recently updated the reporting guidelines for national governments to explicitly encourage UN member states to explain how their flagship national sustainable development policies (and other relevant policies) support the integrated implementation of the SDGs as well as the other two agendas. The guidelines have

also been updated to more explicitly encourage countries to report on the implementation of *all* SDGs – a crucial issue since some VNRs submitted thus far have not addressed progress on SDG 11 whatsoever. The guidelines also encourage national governments to collect and report territorially disaggregated data. These developments should be welcomed, and national governments should be encouraged to use these voluntary guidelines in preparing for the VNRs.

- Encourage local and regional governments to develop their own **synergistic implementation plans** for the three agendas – that include mechanisms for follow-up and review. In many countries governments at different levels are only just starting to develop their own follow-up and review processes. This offers opportunities to explore how synergies across the different agendas can be used, and to pay explicit attention to multi scalar dynamics and interlinkages. For example, local governments can develop local implementation plans that identify how all three agendas discussed in this report, as well as any other contextually relevant agendas, can be localised in their jurisdiction. Each local government should strive to develop a single plan that addresses all three agendas. Such local commitments should from the onset include indicators as well as concrete timeframes and responsibilities for follow-up and review, as better policy decisions and better outcomes at the local level are dependent on a better evidence base and more sophisticated evaluation and reflection. Local follow-up and review processes are also an important opportunity to foster inclusiveness, as they can involve all those actors who shape a city – such as grassroots groups, urban planners, architects, civil society groups, etc. Inclusive local follow-up and review processes allow for a more detailed picture of challenges and opportunities at the local level, and give people and communities an opportunity to express their opinions on the future of their city.

Figure 4.1: Overview of existing and recommended linkages between follow-up and review processes



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