Mauricio Rodas Espinel
Empowering cities

The potential for sustainability at the local level is huge, fundamental and achievable.

Europe, Africa and Latin America now each have roughly half a billion people living in cities. In Asia, there are two billion city-dwellers. Very soon, two-thirds of the global population will be urban.

These are impressive numbers, but what do they mean, in practical terms, for local leaders and civil servants? They mean that more people need access to essential services, and that cities must upscale urbanization with quick, innovative and adaptive plans. We have to think ahead, to ensure more sustainable cities for all.

The potential to achieve sustainability at the local level is huge, fundamental and achievable. But local governments and civil servants cannot do it all on their own.

After all, we have to ensure that city residents live in affordable, healthy, safe and low-carbon buildings; that they move through an intelligent mix of public, private and shared or non-motorized mobility; that they have access to clean water and affordable, clean energy; that inequality is curbed and women are empowered; and that we protect our environment and manage waste in a sustainable way.

A strong New Urban Agenda can make sustainable urbanization possible also for cities with fewer resources and more challenges.