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French support for decentralisation and democratic local governance processes

Directorate-General
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FRENCH SUPPORT FOR DECENTRALISATION AND DEMOCRATIC LOCAL GOVERNANCE PROCESSES

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SUMMARY

➔ The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs is strongly committed to decentralisation processes. It is involved at various levels, using a range of different instruments.

International advocacy

➔ Internationally, France is a strong advocate of decentralisation and democratic local governance. It has provided active support for **the International Guidelines on Decentralisation and Access to Basic Services for all** – a text promoted by UN-HABITAT and its Member States. France is currently the lead country designated by UN-HABITAT for the joint implementation of these two sets of guidelines. Implementation programmes at national level will thus be conducted in a number of countries to form a foundation on which national decentralisation strategies can be built.

France has also encouraged the drafting and adoption for the member countries of the **European Charter on development cooperation in support of local governance**.

Support for the African Municipal Movement

➔ At regional and sub-regional level, French cooperation has long supported **the African Municipal Movement**. It continues to do so, notably through United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLGA) whose headquarters are in Rabat, and support for the setting up of the Council of Local Governments of the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU).

Projects in support of decentralisation

➔ Bilaterally, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs funds a large number of **projects in support of decentralisation**, especially in Africa. These bilateral projects are notably directed at providing institutional support to States, associations of local elected representatives, local government bodies and civil society, with the aim of strengthening development and local democracy.

The network of international technical experts

➔ In order to assist States and local government bodies, an extensive network of **technical experts** enables experience to be exchanged in these sectors. Specifically, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs makes experts available to numerous ministries and associations of elected representatives and the World Secretariat of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and the “Local Finance and Development Committee” of the African branch of the UCLG.

Similarly, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs works closely with the CNFPT (*Centre national de la fonction publique territoriale / National Centre for the Management of Territorial Service*), a French public administration in charge of France with the management and training of local government officers. It is in a position to demonstrate and showcase its expertise and know-how at the international level.

INTRODUCTION

Clarification of terminology: decentralisation and democratic local governance

➔ The term “decentralisation” covers a range of different political, administrative and legal realities varying across world region and country. An important distinction needs to be made between a more Anglo-Saxon conceptual approach, which sees a continuum between notions of delegation, devolution and decentralisation and another view, more common in the French-Speaking world that makes a distinction between “decentralisation” on the one hand, which implies **autonomy and the transfer of powers to local elected authorities** (local or regional governments) and “deconcentration”, which relates to the services provided locally by central government. **Deconcentration and decentralisation, on this latter view, are implemented in a parallel and complementary approach.** The elected authorities thus have local interlocutors representing central government that remains in charge of ensuring proper coherence, equality and, by the same token, solidarity at the national level.

Democratic local governance in a broader sense is made possible by decentralisation processes. It involves governance processes set in train by local authorities, allowing the general public to be involved in defining and implementing fits in with policies at regional level. It is constructed, especially on the African continent, by reconciling the search for consensus typical of traditional informal customs and the adversarial nature of democracy, with a view to achieving genuine integration of public action in the political processes of those societies. Democratic local governance is in this way directed at refounding the legitimacy of public action.

Brief history of the process in France since 1982

➔ France has conducted and is still conducting today a step-by-step decentralisation process. It is from that ongoing process, from its successes as well as its difficulties, that France draws useful lessons and expertise enabling it to assist other States that have chosen to go down the same road.

The core objectives of the process are to **strengthen local democracy** and to **ensure harmonious development of the regions** primarily on the basis of the local economy.

It should be remembered that decentralisation began in France 30 years ago and is still ongoing. In 1982, the Defferre Law marked the beginning of the process by breaking with the Jacobin tradition of national centralisation. Referred to as “**Decentralisation, Act I**”, it aimed to define the principles governing the functioning of local government (in the French regions, *départements* and municipalities) to allow central government to transfer part of its powers to local communities. This has enabled government policy to be brought closer to the general public and strengthens the powers of local elected representatives by removing Prefects’ oversight of local government decisions. From that framework law stemmed a number of laws defining in greater detail the division of powers between the three levels of local government (in the period 1983-1986).

It is also worth noting that under the decentralisation laws of 1982 and especially that of 6 February 1992 on the territorial administration of the republic local governments acquired autonomy in decentralised

cooperation. This means that they can act freely in this sphere within their remit (provided they abide by France's international commitments).

A suitable legislative scheme (the Oudin-Santini, Pintat and Thiollière laws) provided the international action of French local governments with both a legal framework and budgetary potential in support of their action under decentralised cooperation.

In 2003, the French Constitution was revised in order to make decentralisation fully effective, thus marking **Decentralisation, Act II**. This confirmed the decentralised organisation of the Republic, direct local democracy and financial autonomy for local and regional authorities. The Constitution now states that France is a “decentralised Republic”.

There is now talk of **Decentralisation, Act III**, to be laid before Parliament in the near future. The intention of this further stage will be to grant local government even more responsibilities and most notably to strengthen the Regional administrations. Alongside this, and because the issue of resources is crucial to any decentralisation policy, the objective will be to give local governments greater financial autonomy.

These stages illustrate clearly the progressive nature of the decentralisation policy as conducted in parallel to a “*déconcentration*” of the services provided by central government across national territory.

The decentralisation processes in the developing world

➔ The local level is now considered to be a key element for the success of development policies. As the practical ground on which populations actually live, it can take into account the diversity of the issues involved in public action at the interface between the exercise of democracy, provision of public services and economic progress. Indeed, the local level is the setting for the day-to-day expression of democracy, of the rule of law and of development, as well as it represents the most pertinent level for the cooperation between the various actors involved in this context.

Decentralisation offers a major opportunity to “relegitimise” public action at a time when it can sometimes be under challenge by putting in place institutions closer to citizens, encouraging their participation in public life and fostering the authorities' acceptance of a duty of greater accountability for what they do, given their proximity to the general public. It also permits the implementation of policy effectively adapted to the population, especially where core services are concerned. Ultimately, decentralisation can drive a local economic process capable of stimulating national development.

In Africa since the late 1980s, decentralisation has thus become a political priority in many States. But the processes are also highly diverse, originating as they do from a range of different legacies and historical backgrounds. Specifically, a distinction can be made between the **Anglo-Saxon view**, which involves particularly the traditional authorities, associations and local groupings (communities), and the **Latin view** inspired by French experience, which prioritises the institutionalisation of local powers on the basis of a legitimacy founded most notably on elections.

However, a fact generally observed is that administrative decentralisation and transfer of powers to local governments are not accompanied by the subsequent transfer of suitable and sufficient human and financial resources. This means that such decentralisation policy on paper, deprived as it is of the means for its implementation, is in danger of being perceived either as a concession made by a central government reluctant to delegate certain prerogatives or, conversely, as a disengagement of central government from the provision of basic services.

In this context local authorities suffer from a lack of human and financial resources to cope with the many issues involved in managing their budding regions. At the same time, paradoxically, those same local government are increasingly considered to be absolutely essential actors in local development schemes, which leads to high expectations on the part of civil society where local services and public infrastructure are concerned.

Moreover, it is a fact that their proximity to the public now places local authorities in the front line where achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) is concerned. Specifically,

they are particularly well placed to drive democratic local governance processes that bring together the whole range of actors (central government services, local government, civil society and the private sector) to arrive at more inclusive local policy.

In Africa therefore the reality of decentralisation has proved to be particularly complex and ambivalent and there is a need to adjust our bilateral support to the specific contexts of the beneficiary countries, while at the same time putting that support in the broader framework of sub-regional and regional integration processes (WAEMU and the African Union especially).

The consistency of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs programmes with the European Charter on Development cooperation in support of local governance

➔ Stemming as it does from mutual consultation between all members of the European family of actors in cooperation (the European Commission, the Member States, local and regional governments and non-governmental organisations), this Charter lays down principles and arrangements aimed at conferring greater effectiveness on cooperation in support of local governance and decentralisation in partner countries. It aims to define and to share principles for action: to promote a national framework conducive to democratic local governance, to strengthen democratic governance at the national level, to foster economic and social development and combat poverty and inequality, and to reinforce fiscal decentralisation and local government funding. These principles need to be adjusted to match the specific features of local contexts.

It is based on the following observations of fact:

- Democratic local governance, by involving all concerned actors in defining, implementing and monitoring local policies, fosters development that satisfies as effectively as possible the rights and demands of the local population.

- Elected local authorities act as catalyst to local governance and development due to their democratic legitimacy, their proximity to the public and their ability to mobilise local actors. In the framework of decentralisation policies and in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, it is important to enhance the autonomy of local authorities by granting them the powers and resources they need.
- Interaction between territorial levels (i.e. local, national, regional) is essential to the cohesion of public policy.
- The implementation of the Charter is a positive move towards the effectivity of the Paris Declaration. It is based on general principles of coherence, complementarity and coordination shared by the actors in development.

Indeed, the basis of the European Charter on development cooperation in support of local governance comprises the principles of **ownership**, **alignment** of local and national strategies, **harmonisation** through a regional approach to development, **results and mutual accountability**: predictability and transparency in the use of resources by local partners.

1. STRATEGIC REFLECTION AND INTERNATIONAL ADVOCACY

1.1 French support for the drafting of international and regional instruments

1.1.1 The European Charter on development cooperation in support of local governance

➔ France initiated the reflection on the European Charter on development cooperation in support of local governance (mentioned above in the introductory section) with a view to its Presidency of the Council of the European Union, proposing a consultation on this subject over the period to June 2008. Responding to a proposal from the European Commission, this process, initially directed at French actors, was broadened to include the whole of the European community.

The Charter was promoted as an innovative approach and presented as an annexe to the communication “Local Authorities: Actors for Development”; it was welcomed at the EU’s General Affairs and External Relations Council meeting on 10-11 November 2008.

The Charter was drafted on a partnership basis by a working group comprising European actors (European Commission, Member States, local authority and civil society platforms and the private sector) and actors from the South.

After having participated in its drafting and promoted its adoption by the Member States, France continues to argue assiduously for its implementation by the signatory States and its inclusion in European policies for the support of local government.

1.1.2. International guidelines on decentralisation and access to basic services for all

➔ International guidelines on decentralisation and access to basic services for all (water supply, sanitation, waste management, energy, transport, communication, primary schools, public health and safety) were adopted by the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT in 2007 (resolution 21/3) and 2009 (resolution 22/8) respectively. Intended to assist countries in implementing political and legislative reforms, they constitute the first UN document on those themes of strategic importance for development. It is important to note that the two sets of guidelines (**decentralisation/strengthening of local authorities and access to basic services for all**) are implemented concurrently.

■ The guidelines on decentralisation and the strengthening of local authorities are aimed at providing support for political and institutional reforms at national level in order to create conditions conducive to the performance by local authorities of their duties. The latter, due to their proximity to the public, are well placed to guarantee promotion of the general interest and to act as catalyst to development. This initial set of guidelines provides a framework for the implementation of the political, administrative and financial dimensions of decentralisation by offering recommendations on the following topics: governance and local democracy, the powers and responsibilities of local authorities, administrative relations between local authorities and other levels of government and local authorities’ financial resources and capacities.

- Access to essential basic services for all is a cross-cutting key to achievement of the MDGs and can set in motion the virtuous circle of economic development and social inclusion. As the first UN text on this theme, the international guidelines on access to basic services for all marks a strategic step forward for the normative agenda of the United Nations. They address what is a complex issue from the standpoint of governance both in its political aspect (transparency, partnership-based dialogue on definition of local policy between the

various families of actors: central government, local authorities, users, service providers), and its technical aspect (planning, contractualisation, evaluation, sustainable funding, environmental sustainability). They clarify the respective roles and responsibilities of the various stakeholders.

Access to basic services for all is both the main indicator and the ultimate goal of effective decentralisation. Coordinated implementation of the guidelines on decentralisation and the

Long-term French support for the guidelines

- 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg: **France presented the charter on essential services.**
 - 2004, the Founding Congress of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG): **the President of the Republic, Jacques Chirac, proposed the adoption of a text on services by the United Nations.**
 - 2005, 20th session of the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT: **France supported, alongside Brazil, the Philippines and South Africa, an initial resolution 20/5, giving a mandate to UN-HABITAT to identify guiding principles for access to basic services for all.**
 - 2005: the adoption of Priority Solidarity Fund (FSP) 2005-17 **“Training and support to drive South/South networking between local government authorities in developing countries for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals”** which provided €1.5 million to UN-HABITAT, UCLG and UNITAR. **This project supports the Global Observatory on Local Democracy and Decentralisation and the initiative on guidelines for decentralisation and access to basic services.**
 - 2007, 21st session of the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT: **France supported the adoption of international guidelines on decentralisation and the adoption of resolution 21/4 asking UN-HABITAT to prepare international guidelines on improving access to basic services for all. France participated in the international expert group charged with the drafting of this text.**
 - 2009, 22nd session of the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT: **France was the**
- European lead country on resolution 22/8 for the adoption of the international guidelines on access to basic services for all.**
- March 2010, 5th World Urban Forum, Rio de Janeiro: **UN-HABITAT entrusted France with the role of international lead country for the operational implementation phase of the guidelines.**
 - October 2010: the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs organised in conjunction with UN-HABITAT an international meeting **on the operational implementation of the guidelines, laying down a methodology for their application and enabling mobilisation of the partners involved (multilateral and bilateral organisations, partner countries and representatives from local authorities, civil society and the private sector).** The aim was to encourage the launch of dedicated programmes in a dozen or so pilot countries, and to make the guidelines a part of existing programmes and policies.
 - December 2010: France supported the adoption of resolution 65/165 **of the United Nations General Assembly on the implementation of the decisions taken by the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and the strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, which supports the dissemination and application of the guidelines.**
 - April 2011, 23rd session of the Governing Council of UN-HABITAT in Nairobi: **France sponsored resolution 23/8 aimed at improving the horizontal inclusion of the guidelines in the programmes of UN-HABITAT and their ownership by donors.**

strengthening of local authorities alongside the guidelines on access to basic services for all in a sample of pilot countries were recommended in resolution 22/2. This permits the development of an integrated approach to the delivery of services at different local and territorial levels.

With regards to **France's task as lead country for the implementation of the guidelines** the Ministry of Foreign Affairs seeks to promote their coordinated implementation in a sample group of countries in order to develop an integrated approach to the delivery of services and to contribute to achievement of the MDGs. France is therefore supporting, alongside the *Institut de la gestion déléguée* (the Institute for delegated management, a French enterprise foundation), the implementation of national programmes in six countries: Togo, Burkina Faso, Senegal, the Comoros, Laos and Benin. In those six countries multi-actor steering committees are charged with monitoring the initiative on the basis of an integrated approach that takes into account sectoral programmes at the various territorial levels. The programmes are conducted over a period of approximately 12 months. They will lead to the formulation of guidelines adjusted to the context and action plans in the following areas: legislation and political reform, capacity-building and monitoring/evaluation of guideline implementation.

1.1.3. Outlook: current thinking in the context of the post-2015 agenda

➔ Within the scope of reflection on the period to follow 2015 and the next phase of the MDGs, France will take an active part in the reflection and work conducted with a view to promoting more effective consideration for local and regional government and local issues in the future goals. That reflection will be conducted in coordination with the world organisation of local authorities United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), and as part of the informal Development Partners Working Group on Decentralisation and Local Governance (DeLoG).

1.2 Active participation in international forums

1.2.1 Participation in the informal Development Partners Working Group on Decentralisation and Local Governance (DeLoG)

➔ A **working group of bilateral and multi-lateral donors**, also including executive agencies, which was set up at the initiative of KfW, met for the first time in Frankfurt in April 2006. This group later became the informal Development Partners Working Group on Decentralisation and Local Governance (DeLoG). France (i.e. the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the French agency for development, AFD) has been a stakeholder in this organisation for several years. This informal group of donors has acknowledged legitimacy on the international stage. It is composed of the main bilateral and multilateral (European Commission) European donors and is supported by the World Bank, USAID, UNDP and UNCDF. More specifically, it works on issues linked to aid effectiveness in the local governance domain.

In 2011, the group drafted a publication on aid effectiveness for the Busan Summit with the aim of measuring the application by donors of the Paris and Accra declarations in the area of local governance. This publication was based particularly on case studies funded by DeLoG members. In this context France supported the preparation of a case study on Ghana. The publication was presented as part of a side event organised at the summit on local development. France was a major contributor to the drafting of the document and was a member of the side event panel.

The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs has also been a participant since 2012 in a DeLoG subgroup on training. It funded in this framework in November 2012, alongside GIZ and the Belgian technical cooperation, a seminar in Benin on the harmonisation of aid in the decentralisation domain in that country. The aim of the training, which involves sectoral ministries, local government, decentralised central government services, civil society and development partners, is to promote support that is harmonised and aligned with national policies on local governance and decentralisation.

1.2.2 Contribution to Cities Alliance

➔ Cities Alliance, an organisation launched in 1999 in Berlin at the instigation of UN-HABITAT and the World Bank, is dedicated to urban development and the achievement of Millennium Development Goal 7, Target 11 on the elimination of slum housing. It provides a funding tool (a World Bank trust fund) for projects involving the improvement of slum housing, at local and national levels, and strategies for urban development.

Cities Alliance is one of the few permanent structures in the area of urban governance that brings together the World Bank, UN-HABITAT, UNDP, the main bilateral cooperation organisations and international associations of local authorities. France is involved here in defending its positions with regard to international cooperation for local governance.

The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs makes an annual contribution of \$100,000 (nearly €80,000), supplemented by an additional contribution from the French agency for development (AFD) of \$450,000 (nearly €355,000) over three years. At the annual meeting of the advisory group held in November 2011 France was designated as a member of the Executive Committee of Cities Alliance (membership of eight). In addition, an international technical expert has been assigned to the Cities Alliance secretariat.

France contributes to the definition and implementation of national and regional programmes under the aegis of Cities Alliance, in particular in Burkina Faso, Mozambique, Ghana and Vietnam. A regional programme is also beginning in 2012 in the North Africa and Middle East region. The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs is particularly closely involved in the Tunisian aspect of the programme, which is aimed at supporting the decentralisation process set in train by the Tunisian government and fostering inclusive growth in towns and cities.

1.3 Support for the global network of local elected representatives

➔ United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is the common organisation for political representation of local communities and local authorities at global level. It is a result of the merger at the Paris Congress in May 2004 of three pre-existing organisations:

- the Global Federation of United Cities, an organisation whose roots were largely French and continental;
- the International Union of Local Authorities, with more Anglo-Saxon and Nordic roots, founded in 1912;
- and Metropolis, the global association of major cities formed in 1984.

In addition, in December 2012 at the meeting of its World Council at the Africities summit in Dakar, the UCLG is to enter into an alliance with the organisation Regions United/FOGAR. Since 23 October 2012 its president has been Paul Carrasco, governor of Azuay province in Ecuador, successor to Michel Vauzelle, president of France's Provence-Alpes-Côte-d'Azur regional administration. Following this, UCLG will become the only worldwide organisation of local government.

Its headquarters are in Barcelona and its president is the mayor of Istanbul, Kadir Topbas. The Secretary General is Josep Roig, a Catalan academic and former secretary general of Metropolis. Bertrand Delanoë was among the founders and the first president of the association. The first Secretary General, Élisabeth Gateau, was also French.

UCLG groups are present on every continent, for example UCLG-Africa (UCLGA) in Africa, the headquarters of the latter being in Rabat, and where Europe is concerned, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) which is based in Paris. In France, two French organisations coexist, both members of UCLG and each with its own specific remit: AFCCRE (*Association française du conseil des communes et régions d'Europe* / French Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (FACEMR)) and CUF (United Cities France).

Recognition of the key role played by local government in democratic governance is one of the main thrusts of the French cooperation strategy (CICID 2006). The Democratic Governance Mission at the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs thus established a partnership with UCLG right from its initial creation. Similarly, the DAECT (*Délégation pour l'action extérieure des collectivités territoriales* / Delegation for External Action of Local and Regional Authorities) maintains close contacts with that organisation.

The Democratic Governance Mission currently supports UCLG in two ways:

- **Financial support** for the drafting of the GOLD III report. One of the flagship activities of the association is the publication every three years of a report setting out the issues surrounding local governance. This report uses the data on decentralisation and local democracy from the Global Observatory on Local Democracy and Decentralisation (GOLD). The report is the outcome of a three-year process of research and debate between local authorities, experts and academia. To date, UCLG has published two reports: the first, in 2008, provided a general overview of decentralisation and local democracy around the world, and the second, published in 2010, was devoted to the topic of local finance. The organisation is currently in the process of preparing the drafting of the GOLD III report which will focus on essential public services.

The college of researchers of PFVT (*Partenariat français pour la ville et les territoires – French Alliance for Cities and Territorial Development*), a partnership composed of French actors in urban cooperation launched in July 2009 at the instigation of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs and whose technical secretariat has recently been set up within the French agency for development (AFD), has been mobilised to contribute to this report.

- **Support in the form of technical expertise**, making available two international technical experts, one based in Barcelona and specifically charged with assisting in drafting the GOLD III report, and the second based in Rabat with UCLG's local finance and development committee.

2. SUPPORT FOR THE AFRICAN MUNICIPAL MOVEMENT

➔ In Africa, the local level can be seen to offer potential for integration. This has been true historically: local populations maintain close cooperative relationships or historical ties which were never undermined by the political borders drawn by colonisation. It is also an integrated space in economic terms, notably through the use of local and foreign currencies in day-to-day trade. And lastly, the local level is today, in administrative terms, an absolutely key actor in regional integration given the geographical and demographic weight of border communities.

Given this observation of fact, it could be seen to be important for France to provide support to the municipal movement at the sub-regional level not only by strengthening UCLG Africa, but also by supporting the emergence of the Council of Local Governments within WAEMU.

2.1 Cooperation with United Cities and Local Governments of Africa

➔ France has a long history of working in partnership with the African Municipal Movement. At the bilateral level, many FSP projects for assisting decentralisation and urban governance processes in Africa have been set up since the commencement of the process in the 1990s, and they continue to the present day, e.g. in Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Niger, Togo and elsewhere. (See part 3).

At the regional level France maintained intensive and sustained cooperation with the **Municipal Development Partnership** (MDP) until 2011. Alongside this, France has worked with **United Cities and Local Governments of Africa** (UCLGA) on similar issues since the mid-2000s.

This is so because after a dozen or so years of existence the UCLGA gradually came to be seen as the regional organisation of reference, the most effective embodiment of the interests and projects of African local authorities. Since French cooperation was working in close partnership with African local government it needed to be able to rely on a body representing those authorities which could provide coordination between the various countries and allow a concerted and coherent programme to be conducted on a broader scale. Against the backdrop of disengagement from the MDP, the working relationship with UCLGA was strengthened.

That support was expressed in concrete terms by a mobilising PSF project which was started in 2007 with the aim of providing support for local governance in the countries of the priority solidarity zone. This had three components, the first relating to leadership and coordination of the African Municipal Movement, the second directed at support for decentralisation and sustainable development policies in the territories of West and Central Africa, with which the MDP was initially charged, followed later by the UCLGA.

Expertise in the area of local economic development is another major focus of French action in

support of local governance in Africa. Support for UCLGA thus also took the form in 2012 of funding for the local economic development programme of that organisation (under the LEDNA programme: Local Economic Development Network for Africa), implemented in Benin and Togo.

2.2 Support for the establishment of the WAEMU Council of Local Governments

➔ On 11 April 2012 the ceremony took place for the launch of the WAEMU Council of the Local Governments (CLG), set up in May 2011 by the summit of heads of state and government of the organisation. The creation of this body was the outcome of argumentation promoting the concept by UCLGA and later taken up by associations of local authorities favouring the creation of a body directed, along the lines of Europe's Committee of the Regions, at fostering greater local authority involvement in WAEMU's decision processes. The CLG's task is to consider all issues likely to have an impact on local governments in WAEMU.

French cooperation took an interest in CLG from the beginning. In 2012, France therefore decided to support its initial activities: its communication plan, the drafting of a White Paper on financial decentralisation and support for the network of local elected women representatives. It continues to be attentive to the future prospects and development of this WAEMU body.

France also closely follows the work done by the All Africa Ministerial Conference on Decentralization and Local Development (AMCOD), a body of which all the ministers concerned are members.

3. BILATERAL SUPPORT FOR DEVOLUTION AND DECENTRALISATION PROCESSES IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE SOUTH

3.1 Main lines and types of bilateral support

3.1.1 Main principles and thrusts for support

➔ The French approach to democratic local governance is based on the idea of participation. It argues for the creation of **public spaces for dialogue** to involve all actors in policies of relevance to them. It encourages development that fits as closely as possible the rights and wishes of local populations, especially in the area of essential services. Such locally based democracy is a factor for **ownership** of local policies. It provides an important opportunity to rebuild the trust of citizens, re-legitimise public action and ensure its viability over the longer term.

French support essentially involves **building on local capacity** in the sector, at both central and local levels, using existing training organisations in the beneficiary countries.

Another main thrust of French support in this sector is **financial decentralisation and the strengthening of local taxation**. These aspects are taken increasingly into consideration in projects. This is so because it is ever more apparent that this issue shapes the implementation of genuine decentralisation, particularly in Africa. It should be recalled that local taxation is among the priority areas of French cooperation in the fiscal domain, defining local taxation as “an issue of local governance and democracy” in order “to foster ownership of the Millennium Development Goals by adjusting them to specific local priorities”. The text by Gérard Chambas, “*Mobiliser*

les ressources locales en Afrique subsaharienne” (Local public finance in Sub-Saharan Africa), published in 2010 under the aegis of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, also offers a basis for action by French cooperation in this sphere. These two core documents propose the development of local taxation, currently little more than embryonic, a rationalisation of tax exemptions, which tend to become the norm and weaken official administration, and finally the promotion of effective and fair taxation. In addition, they stress the importance of reinforcing the local economic fabric able to enhance public resources.

These two texts also emphasise the need to assist the implementation of a tax structure, a system of financial accountability and a system of control. Cooperation in the area of local taxation not only presupposes an enhancement of the capacity of local government authorities, but also the definition of a national policy for the funding of local government, which should be the outcome of dialogue between the ministries of the Interior and Decentralisation and the Finance ministries.

3.1.2 French support for democratic local governance and the decentralisation process: types and tools

➔ Types of action

French support is based on a number of types of activity aimed at different categories of actors involved in decentralisation processes:

- **Enhancement of the capacity of national institutions in charge of decentralisation**

at the central level: the **ministry** in charge of Decentralisation (which may be the ministry of the Interior, a ministry of Local Development or a ministry of Decentralisation), the **local and regional government directorate** (training programs, French technical assistance, infrastructures), as well as the **ministry responsible for the Economy and Finance** and in particular the directorate-general for taxation, for all aspects relating to local taxation.

- **Enhancement of the capacity of associations of local governments and associations of local elected representatives:** strategic support for their advocacy directed at the national authorities in favour of local governance, French technical assistance, aid for the establishment of a documentation centre, and so on.
- **Direct support for local and regional government.** Depending on the country, a choice of pilot local governments in order to build capacity: training programs, capacity-building (management, human resources, local ownership and management of projects).
- **Concerted action with decentralised cooperation,** notably with regard to the offering of expertise and support for the local ownership and management of projects.

➔ Tools

France implements major programs on the ground, working through Priority Solidarity Fund (PSF-FSP) projects.

What is a PSF?

The Priority Solidarity Fund of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs is a project aid instrument eligible for use in countries in the Priority Solidarity Zone (ZSP). **Its purpose is to provide finance, exclusively grant-based, for projects put forward by the countries concerned in the area of institutional, social or cultural development and research as well as projects proposed by non-governmental organisations. The PSF is therefore the preferred instrument for partnership not only with States, but also with donors and civil society.**

There are several different types of PSF project:

- **Projects initiated on site: “country” or “State” PSFs executed within a bilateral framework. A “State” project involves the signing of a funding agreement between the French embassy and the beneficiary State.**

The Social Development Fund (CD-FSD) is a “State” PSF of a particular kind, and is intended to finance locally-based projects promoted by local associations or, more generally, initiatives sourced in civil society.

- **Projects initiated at regional level: “mobilising” PSFs, which allow funding to be provided for a series of actions of relevance to a group of countries. Such projects are implemented by the central administration of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs in conjunction with the various States concerned or, if applicable, with an intergovernmental organisation such as a regional integration organisation.**

An example of a “country” PSF: the PSF for the support of devolution and decentralisation in Haiti

The importance of the PSF project for the support of devolution and decentralisation, which began prior to the earthquake in 2009, was reaffirmed by the Haitian authorities after that event. This project (€2.4 million after topping up in 2010 and later in 2011) is aimed at building capacity for decentralised provision of State services and for regional public service (with the CNFPT: Centre national de la fonction publique territoriale/ National Centre for the Management of Territorial Service). It also provides technical support for the technical agencies run by municipal authorities.

Another objective of this FSP is to enhance local resources: ensuring the operational effectiveness of the fund for the management and development of local and regional government, registration and census of built property, and local taxation. Citizens are encouraged to participate in local public policy. A technical expert has been assigned to the Ministry of the Interior since February 2011. The project generates synergy between French decentralised cooperation, the programmes of other donors (EU, UNDP), the French agency for development (AFD) urban development projects, and the French programme for preliminary real estate registration and security of tenure.

An example of a mobilising PSF : the PSF “Strengthening urban governance and local taxation in Sub-Saharan Africa” (GUFL)

The idea for this PSF stemmed from the following observations:

- the increasing importance of urban issues due to the African continent’s very rapid urban growth;
- a high level of mobilisation of French public and private sector actors in urban cooperation via the French Alliance for Cities and Territorial Development (PFVT);
- France’s comparative advantages in this area: decentralised cooperation, the acknowledged expertise of its town planning professionals, the quality and competitiveness of major French enterprises in the field of basic services;
- the activities of the French agency for development (AFD) in support of local government and urban development (development of innovative tools for loans to local authorities with and without central government guarantees).

A horizontal project for the support of urban governance will allow all these programmes to be extended and supplemented to foster decentralisation and the African Municipal Movement.

The overall objective is dual in character:

- to foster inclusive urban development in order to respond to the rapid growth of African towns and cities by contributing through a sample set of pilot cities to a generalisation of processes for democratic urban governance centred around local governments;
- to enhance the capacity for urban and fiscal governance of local governments in the context of decentralisation processes implemented by the authorities at the national level.

It has three principal components:

- Component 1, enhancement of the capacities of central and local government;
- Component 2, support for democratic urban governance processes;
- Component 3, optimisation of the mobilisation of local resources and support for land tenure policies.

It is being implemented in six countries: Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal and Togo.

At the present time **approximately 20 “country” PSF projects supporting decentralisation** are in progress, notably in Africa and Haiti. Those projects are implemented with the support of a network of international technical experts (there are more than 30 in this domain) assigned to ministries for Decentralisation or national associations of local elected representatives.

The projects are aimed firstly at supporting national decentralisation processes and secondly at enhancing the capacity of local government and associations of elected representatives. This latter aspect relates not only to building human capacity, but also to **reinforcement of the capacity to collect financial resources**, particularly through local taxation. These projects are designed to complement those for decentralised cooperation, notably in those countries where this is most active (Burkina Faso, Mali, and Senegal).

As backing for the action embodied in the above “country” PSFs and that of the French agency for

development in the area of urban development, a mobilising PSF has begun this year in six countries in Sub-Saharan Africa with a focus on stronger urban governance and local taxation.

Other PSF projects relate to governance in the broad sense, including for example action in favour of the modernisation of central government or the judicial system, as well as a component dedicated to decentralisation or local governance. This is true for example of the “crisis exit” PSF in Guinea.

The Social Development Fund (SDF), which is, as already explained, a particular type of PSF, constitutes an additional instrument which can help support decentralisation reform in the countries of the South.

This locally-based scheme available for civil society organisations and local government bodies provides funding for micro-projects in the social and collective service sectors. The budget

An example of a governance PSF with a decentralisation component: the “crisis exit” PSF in Guinea

The distinguishing feature of this FSP is its operational and multisectoral character.

The project’s three priority areas for action are:

- the reconstruction of a modern State governed by the rule of law, capable of resolving issues of national reconciliation and raising its own fiscal resources by means of a system that is transparent;
- taking official administration in hand to ensure that it has more young people and more women, that it values and prioritises competence and reins in its excessive staffing;
- provision of support for the decentralisation process in order to restore the trust of the general public in their local elected representatives by bringing decision-making closer to the public and in order to foster innovative and participatory approaches to local governance.

In the third of these domains it is worth mentioning 37 local debates on decentralisation held at the beginning of 2012 and attended by 2,000 participants. This participatory approach was directed at encouraging open and extensive reflection on society and its actors with a view to informing future decisions on decentralisation.

envelope for the SDF is managed on the basis of criteria and procedures specific to each country. While helping to combat poverty, SDF-funded micro-projects must lead to enhancement of the capacity and means for action of local actors in developing their territories.

The SDF can act in this way as a relevant instrument for local governments which do not enjoy easy access to funds from technical and financial partners in order to strengthen performance of their public service tasks. By allowing financial resources to be mobilised, the use of additional technical skills and the setting up of frameworks for mutual consultation across the relevant territory, the SDF makes an active contribution to local development and collaboration between local authorities and civil society in the territories where it is applied.

Support for the process of decentralisation or for local governance can also be provided outside the PSF through exchanges of expertise which may involve French partners, particularly the CNFPT for example (*Centre national de la fonction publique territoriale* / National Centre for the Management of Territorial Service) or FEI (France expertise internationale).

An example of an SDF in Senegal

In Senegal for example, half of all SDF-funded projects relate to sectors where there has been a transfer of powers from central to local governments under the decentralisation reform programme (education, health, social action, water supply, sanitation, hygiene, regional development). Some of these projects have been designed to complement initiatives for decentralised cooperation, thus augmenting the impact of the action taken in terms of capacity-building for local

government’s ownership and management of projects. The projects, whether implemented by civil society or local authorities, must be agreed at the outset by the local authorities and decentralised departments of central government in order to ensure that they are fully integrated into local development plans and national sectoral policies. The aim is also to guarantee dialogue between civil society and local authorities.

An example of support for decentralisation in the Central African Republic

The definition and implementation of the national policy for decentralisation and devolution steered by the MATD (Ministry for Territorial Administration and Decentralisation) is supported by the UNDP (through its framework programme for democratic governance: PCGD 2012-2015) and France, which has assigned an international technical expert to the Minister.

Although France does not currently make use of the FSP, its support meets MATD needs precisely. Training for the managerial staff in the department in charge of decentralisation has for example been funded with requests for combined France/Côte d'Ivoire expertise which have enriched the decentralisation charter currently being drafted, along with its action plan. Similarly, the MATD central inspectorate has been rehabilitated by a

process of training and equipment grants. This administrative body has thus been able to travel around the country's prefectures, sub-prefectures and town halls in order to arrive at a clear diagnosis of the malfunctions in local administration.

The decentralisation/devolution process is also at the heart of the implementation in the Central African Republic of the "New Deal" (the "New Deal" being the outcome of discussion on aid effectiveness at the Busan summit). The national workshop for the implementation of the New Deal (drafting of the roadmap) will take place jointly with the first national conference of sub-prefects, with funding from France. This will mean that the objectives and principles of the New Deal will not be confined to the central level but will filter down throughout the country.

3.2 Coordination of the bilateral support with decentralised cooperation

➔ Our bilateral and multilateral action in support of decentralisation has been strengthened by the intensive and diverse decentralised cooperation existing between French local governments and local authorities throughout the world but especially in Africa. As a decentralised state, France attaches particular importance to such partnerships between territorial administrations that share the same day-to-day concerns at local level. They are supported by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, which has put in place tools for the pooling of resources and the generation of synergy with the other actors involved internationally on the one hand and, on the other, seeks to ensure the coherence and coordination of cooperation programmes conducted by central government and decentralised cooperation programmes.

Bilateral cooperation is consistent with French local government cooperation programmes, in terms of the definition of projects, followed by their implementation and even in some cases their evaluation.

Where cooperation in the area of support for local governance is concerned, France's local government and central government share the same priorities: capacity-building, a participatory approach to local governance and the need to provide support at multiple levels.

3.3 The network of international technical experts

➔ France has an extensive network of international technical experts, especially in the area of governance. In fact, nearly 140 French technical experts work in this domain, in particular in Africa, but also in other regions of the world.

Some 40 of them work more specifically in the area of local governance. The following distinction should be made within this body of experts:

- So-called "**bilateral**" experts assigned to a body in a partner State. As concerns they may be assigned:
 - to national ministries of the Interior or a ministry responsible for Decentralisation;

An example of joint mobilisation with decentralised cooperation : the PSF “Supporting the decentralisation process in Morocco” (PAD Maroc)

This PSF provides an example of a project for support of decentralisation which benefited, on the French side, from the joint mobilisation of central government actors (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of the Interior, National School of Administration (ENA), among others) and actors in territorial administration (CNFPT, local government authorities).

One component of the project was notably directed at enhancing the capacity for project ownership and management by local government through the execution of projects designed and conducted in partnership with French local government bodies. This has genuinely contributed to synergy of French and Moroccan national policies in the field of decentralised cooperation.

Evaluation of this PSF conducted in 2012 indicates that this component “has clearly brought about a change in the relationship between central and local government”. It has also helped the target local authorities to develop new or stronger

relationships with the civil society stakeholders. At the central level, ownership of the scheme by the Moroccan government, with co-financing by the Bilateral Fund for the support of decentralised cooperation, has stimulated the promotion of new approaches for cooperation between French and Moroccan local authorities, going beyond isolated micro-twinning schemes and opening the way to more relevant programmes that allow them to become acknowledged actors in Franco-Moroccan cooperation.

Also worth noting is the continuation of the majority of the decentralised cooperation projects after the end of the PSF and the deepening of the cooperative relationships between the partner local government bodies.

The mobilising PSF “Urban Governance and Local Taxation” was also conceived in synergy with decentralised cooperation since the target municipalities were chosen for their active partnerships with French local authorities.

- to national associations of local elected representatives;
- or possibly to the Directorate-general for taxation (experts working on issues relating to local taxation).
- So-called “multilateral” experts assigned to international organisations. As regards local, the following are noteworthy:
 - two experts assigned to United Cities and Local Governments (in Barcelona and Rabat);
 - one expert assigned to Cities Alliance in Washington;
 - two experts assigned to the World Bank in Washington working on land tenure issues.

This is a unique skill network which can be supplemented by resource individuals from the cooperation sections of French embassies. The French Ministry of Foreign Affairs wishes to add more value to this network and to foster, by working through it, links between the international and national levels.

The year 2012 was also marked by the first seminar of international technical experts and cooperation attachés in the area of local governance. This took place on 25-26 June in Cotonou in Benin.

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

AFCCRE	.....	<i>Association française du conseil des communes et régions d'Europe</i> / French Association of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (FACEMR)
AFD	.....	<i>Agence française de développement</i> / French agency for development
AMCOD	.....	All Africa Ministerial Conference on Decentralisation and Local Development
CEMR	.....	Council of European Municipalities and Regions
CLG	.....	Council of the Local Governments
UCLG	.....	United Cities and Local Governments
UCLGA	.....	United Cities and Local Governments of Africa
CICID	.....	<i>Comité interministériel de la coopération et du développement</i> / Interministerial Cooperation and Development Committee
CNFPT	.....	<i>Centre national de la fonction publique territoriale</i> / National Centre for the Management of Territorial Service
CUF	.....	<i>Cités unies France</i> / United Cities France
DAECT	.....	<i>Délégation pour l'action extérieure des collectivités territoriales</i> / Delegation for External Action of Local and Regional Authorities
DeLoG	.....	Informal Development Partners Working Group on Decentralisation and Local Governance
ITE	.....	International Technical Experts
FEI	.....	<i>France expertise internationale</i> / French operator in the area of public international expertise
FSD / SDF	.....	<i>Fonds social de développement</i> / Social development fund
FSP / PSF	.....	<i>Fonds de solidarité prioritaire</i> / Priority Solidarity Fund
GIZ	.....	<i>Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit</i> / German Society for International Cooperation
KfW	.....	<i>Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau</i> / German development bank
LEDNA	.....	Local Economic Development Network of Africa
MAE	.....	French Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MATD	.....	<i>Ministère de l'Administration Territoriale et de la Décentralisation</i> / Ministry of territorial administration and decentralisation in the Central African Republic
MGD	.....	<i>Mission de la gouvernance démocratique</i> / Democratic Governance Mission
MDG	.....	Millennium Development Goals
NGO	.....	Non-governmental organisation
UN	.....	United Nations
MDP	.....	Municipal Development Programme
PFVT	.....	<i>Partenariat français pour la ville et les territoires</i> / French Alliance for Cities and Territorial Development
UNDP	.....	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	.....	United Nations Environment Programme
EU	.....	European Union
WAEMU	.....	West African Economic and Monetary Union
UNITAR	.....	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
ZSP	.....	<i>Zone de solidarité prioritaire</i> / Priority Solidarity Zone

This report provides an overview of the actions conducted by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MAE), and by its Democratic Governance Mission in particular, in support of processes for decentralisation and, more generally, democratic local governance.

Indeed, France has been closely involved in this sphere for many years. Its support is provided in different forms at a number of levels with a concern for a coherent integrated approach.

At the level of international forums France argues constantly for decentralisation and democratic local governance within the framework of dialogue with the many actors in these sectors and in the context of the donor groups of which France is a member.

French cooperation has been working for many years with the African Municipal Movement at the regional and sub-regional level and continues to do so, notably through United Cities and Local Governments of Africa as well as regional integration bodies such as WAEMU.

At the bilateral level, the MAE conducts numerous projects for the assistance of devolution/decentralisation processes, notably in Africa. Those bilateral projects are particularly focused on promoting contacts with central governments, with associations of elected representatives, local government bodies and civil society, the aim being to strengthen local democracy and deepen the dialogue between local authorities, central government and their citizens.

An extensive network of international technical experts is also present at these various levels in order to support programme implementation, to ensure programme cohesion and to support national governments and associations of elected representatives in decentralisation processes.

Directorate-General of Global Affairs, Development and Partnerships of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The missions of the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs are:

- summarize information on the changing global economy and put it into perspective, prepare decisions;
- on the French government's foreign policy;
- draft France's foreign policy;
- coordinate France's international relations;
- protect French interests abroad and assist French nationals outside France.

The creation of the Directorate-General of Global Affairs, Development and Partnerships (DGM) in April 2009, as part of the reform of the Ministry, enables diplomacy to anticipate, identify and respond to the challenges of globalisation more effectively.

Confronted with global issues that have a direct impact on the lives of our citizens and multiple actors, the Ministry intends to emphasise the need to tackle global issues, in the firm belief that every major economic, cultural and societal issue calls for collective action with more outward focus, anticipation, inter-ministerial coordination, responsiveness, interdisciplinarity and a resolutely European approach.

