

# **PARTICIPATORY LOCAL GOVERNANCE**

## **PREAMBLE**

Participatory local governance for the vast majority of people, regardless of political situations, is the most accessible level of engagement with public authority and state institutions. It is the mechanism and channel closest to the people for accessing basic services and opportunities to improve their lives, for participation in public processes where decisions affecting their lives are made, and for exercising their rights and obligations. The Greens believe that effective local governance in a participatory manner is the key to development that is inclusive and sustainable.

## **VISION**

The vision of the Greens is to improve the quality of life of the people both at the urban and rural settings, and reduce inequality in all its forms across the society and at the same time enhance relations between people and public institutions. The vision is to make local governance a tool for sustainable living that is community-driven.

## **OBJECTIVE**

The objective of the Greens is to strive for a democracy in which all citizens have the right to express their views, and are able to directly participate in the environmental, economic, social, and political decisions which affect their lives so that power and responsibility are concentrated in local communities.

## **ACTION PLAN**

The Greens acknowledge local government's valuable role as a tier of government, in local governance, and in the representation of local issues and delivery of essential community services. Therefore, the Greens will --

### **Local Democracy**

- Ensure that decisions are made at the level closest to the people and communities
- Ensure that the actions of local governments enhance the social, environmental, cultural, and economic wellbeing of the communities they serve
- Support municipal councils to explore and try participatory and collaborative democratic decision-making processes, including for budget setting
- Create a mechanism that allows voters to decide who governs local authorities

### **Local Governance**

- Help people develop an effective local governance and local development agenda which supports a range of efforts in a variety of contexts -- rural, urban, coastal, marine -- in both stable and crisis-affected environments
- Establish structures and systems for multi-level governance through policy, institutional and capacity development, and the development of locally driven systems for the delivery of services
- Approach and facilitate development cooperation among territories for enhancing local capacity for sustainable development

- Make a provision of key inputs into local governance systems -- facilitating democratic accountability, strengthening rule of law and security, service delivery and management
- Make a provision of key inputs into local governance systems -- enhancing fiscal resources and empowerment, equipping collection and management of spatial information, and accelerating social capital formation
- Support decentralisation and local governance, development cooperation and local economic development with sustainable goals
- Support institutions and local government initiatives in the localisation of the post-2015 development agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Work with local governments and different local stakeholders to help address inequalities, to prevent violent conflict, and ensure equality measures are gender-responsive, inclusive and effective

### **Provisions**

- Ensure that different areas have appropriate government structures as they may have different needs in terms of organisational structure
- Promote multi-party representation in the local body governance electoral processes - local authorities run by single party cabinets, or by directly elected Mayors, are not in the best interests of local democracy
- Ensure that candidates' political party memberships, if any, appear on the ballot paper, in the interests of transparency
- Abolish donations to Councillors and election candidates from property developers
- Allow local council amalgamations only where demonstrably supported by local communities and based in sound policy that transparently quantifies the environmental, financial, and social benefits
- Ensure that the local councils act more quickly and efficiently to facilitate climate resilient development including appropriate budget and staff allocations
- Retain the ability of local government to advocate in the interests of the local community to other communities and governments
- Ensure maximum community participation and adherence to this advice, including in deliberative processes, for the development of strategies, plans, and budgets for municipalities
- Restrict the provisions that allow local councils to consider matters in closed session to only those which are absolutely necessary to protect the privacy of individuals, or certain contractual or legal matters
- Ensure that local councils provide policies and plans that affect communities with clear consultation processes, in plain language, as well as multiple languages that reflect those communities
- Require the principles of ecological, social, and economic sustainability to be the basis of all local government policy and practice
- Ensure the rights of communities to self-governance
- Call for local government elections to be based on preferential voting
- Support reform of the federal/state tax in order to appropriately resource community and environmental services and to increase equity across the spheres of government

- Acknowledge the value of the services, in particular community based environmental and social services, that local governments provide to the community above and beyond their foundation mandate
- Ensure that any monies allocated to local governments for infrastructure are aimed at increasing social and economic capital
- Increase local government's ability to raise revenue via its own appropriate endeavours and local enterprise
- Ensure that state governments do not hinder local governments' ability to achieve cost efficiency and sustainability
- Make the Councillors and Council staff aware of the importance of making decisions that embody the visions of the community
- Ensure a body for local government standards in order to promote ethical behaviour of Councillors
- Ensure that councils do not adopt standing orders that have the effect of silencing dissent
- Adopt a common code of conduct across local governments
- Fight against systematic exclusion of racial, ethnic, and religious communities
- Seek support of grassroots movements and other organisations of civil society working for democratic, transparent and accountable government, at all levels from local to global
- Uphold the right of citizens to have access to official information and to free and independent media

### **Community Participation**

- Strengthen multi-stakeholder engagement at the local level for more community participation and capacity and the inclusion of marginalised groups
- Decentralise and strengthen institutional capacity at the local levels of government
- Localise the Sustainable Development Goals through policy, implementation, and monitoring at local levels
- Adopt the area-based approaches to stabilisation, migration, and displacement issues
- Ensure women's equal participation in decision-making and representation in the local government

### **Participatory Democracy**

- Build grassroots institutions that enable decisions to be made directly at the appropriate level by those affected, based on systems which encourage civic vitality, voluntary action, and community responsibility
- Ensure that the elected representatives are committed and held accountable to the principles of transparency, truthfulness, and accountability in governance
- Ensure that all electoral systems are transparent and democratic, and that this is enforced by law
- Create a compulsory register of elected representatives' and senior officers' pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests, which will be open to public inspection including all donations
- Enact a law to provide for referenda to be held on any government decision at the instance of a prescribed percentage of that body's electorate
- Ensure that government at all levels is accountable to electors between elections

- Take necessary legislative steps to provide for any representative's electors to be able to petition for the recall of any elected person

### **Identity and Privacy**

- Ensure that information on individual identity is held confidential, unless that confidentiality is waived by specific agreement or overridden by a specific public interest stipulated by law as overriding confidentiality
- Ensure that there is a balance between the need of government on behalf of the community to obtain and hold information to identify individual citizens and the civil rights of individuals, particularly that of privacy
- Ensure that individual's civil rights prevail, unless waived by specific agreement or overridden by a specific public interest stipulated by law as overriding privacy
- Prohibit the routine surveillance of citizens who protest against the government
- Create mandatory data breach reporting for all government departments, companies, banks and political parties

### **Public Administration**

- Make decisions and take action throughout the local government based on the principle of subsidiarity that nothing to be done centrally if it can be done equally well, or better, locally
- Make all major political decisions, which affect people's lives, with their active participation through processes requiring open and informed debate rather than simply voting without discussion
- Encourage cross-party cooperation using the open space model for developing inclusive democratic decision-making in local communities
- Make available access to information the public needs in order to be able to take part in decision-making
- Ensure freedom of information, and openness of government and its procedures so that a more democratic process and decentralised society is evolved
- Make communities self-reliant in terms of food production, water, sustainable resource use and labour
- Ensure that public services always takes account of the wider social and environmental impacts of their actions
- Ensure that the government actions are subject to the rule of law, which must be overseen by an independent judiciary
- Spread awareness that the Central Parliament needs to actively assist in the process of decentralisation

### **Watchdog**

- Enact a law to create a commission for citizens' rights, which will be empowered to receive complaints of maladministration in any public body, to investigate them and to recommend redress; and this commission shall be empowered to accept complaints from any citizen or group of citizens
- Ensure that the office of Ombudsman is created and Ombudsman is given power to investigate complaints which affect all or most of the citizens of a local government area

- Introduce an independent body to audit statistics and finances, to avoid their manipulation by government departments

### **Funding**

- Ensure that there is no taxation without representation
- Make available appropriate resources to meet the costs of new responsibilities given by the government
- Ensure a register of all donations to local government or related party donations is made public

### **Finance**

- Evolve a system of government and administration which best fulfils the needs and aspirations of citizens and the challenges of the future, within the limits of sustainability including resource use such as protection of key wildlife corridors and waterways
- Make public expenditure decisions at the local level that affect the immediate environment and society
- Facilitate accountability measures to the public including in all fiscal decisions
- Ensure that councils have discretion over which revenue raising powers they wish to use within public guidelines

### **Electoral Reform**

- Ensure that elections at the local levels of government are held by systems of election that provide for proportionality so that the political aspirations and views of each area are represented
- Enact a law that the voting age for all elections is reduced to 16
- Ensure that all terms for elected representatives to all levels of government are fixed in length
- Ensure that the process is open and inclusive, and not seek to put unnecessary obstacles in place which may prevent individuals from seeking election

### **References:**

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