



Honorable Minsters, Excellencies, Colleagues, ladies and gentleman, dear guests,

Exactly 5 years ago I have packed for a return trip to my country Tunisia from my other country Holland with my luggage full of hope to contribute in building a new era of Tunisia and Libya post revolution.

5 years is a milestone, It is an occasion to celebrate- an opportunity to momentarily look back but a golden ticket to chart the path forward. I am delighted to extend a warm word of welcome to you all at CILG-VNGI anniversary to which we have a chosen the message of " Acting local is the solution, a challenge worth taking" in case you are still wondering ;)

This afternoon we will have the chance and honor to hear partners and donors, friends and colleagues who travelled the road with us since 2011.

We will end our afternoon sessions with a more festive celebration.

These past 5 years had confirmed to us that The right actions undertaken for the right reasons generally lead to good outcomes over time.

What has motivated VNGI in 2011 to reach up to Tunisia and Libya was the hope the arab spring has generated for local communities, for cities aspiring for better future.

We started in a context of social upraising and confusion and we believe Tunisia has done great job moving forward in the right direction. And we salute the achievements of the Libyan actors.

Coming ourselves from the world of local governments, it was not difficult to build a trust relation with everyone. In the beginning I was frequently asked about our agenda, why were we helping Tunisia and Libya, what is in it for us, I always answer, our hidden and declared agenda, our mission and goal is to reinforce local governments. We are committed to build a network of strong cities, this is for us a vital condition to sustainable development peace and social cohesion.

Our fields of intervention were from the beginning built on certain logic of short to medium term action as well as long term action. We started with all aspects linked to crises management, mediation and quick wins to get people trust again in the local institutions. Then we moved forward to pave the way to deep reforms about decentralisation and local governance through enhancing the public debates,



connecting the dots between stakeholders and bringing them to share a common vision. We have challenged the reality with innovative projects, pilot initiatives in the urban governance, LED, partnership between cities and CSO, gender equality, we concluded on the does and don't's and now we are at the stage of producing tools, supporting deep reforms, upscaling the impact at national level and bringing the focus on the most practical modalities within integrated vision.

We have tried to translate these years in figures. It has been very busy 5 years ;)

When I was thinking to share with you the highlights of those years, the list was too long, every detail of our work was a learning process.

However some moments are worth mentioning.

In Tunisia, The close collaboration we had with ANC to help drafting the Chapter 7 of the constitution. We are proud of this great achievement and very conscious of the challenge of its operationalisation.

The support to the legal reforms on Municipal election law and local government law. The long process we started since 2013 with regional and national debates including all the voices from local to national institutions, universities and CSO.

Launching the CNP-EGAL. The national charter of equality between woman and man in the management of local affairs and development the tools for its integration at local level.

The joint action we had with other programs, the joint OSS espaces citoyens with GIZ, Developing on city development strategy with cities alliance. We have been reaching up to other programs advocating for constructive coordination.

The first intermunicipal PPP project in Seliana to establish the unit of hospital waste management, with a lady entrepreneur from the region. Great ownership and commitment from all layers of governance.

The inter-municipal cross border cooperation between Tunisia and Libya. How the Tunisian municipalities involved their Libyan colleagues to take part of the very first activities in 2012 leading to the first local governance support program in Libya.

I would like here to honor our Libyan guests and to honor their commitment to establish strong local governance as a vital factor for peace and prosperity.

The support of law 59 on decentralisation from early stages to its current revisions.



Enhancing the Charter for dialogue and mediation for peace construction at local level. A toolkit of manuals to reinforce capacities of local governments. Pilot projects reinforcing the link between the city and civil society organisation and rebuilt the trust between the stakeholders. Supporting the network of female councillors...

We have been working through a triangular model of cooperation between Tunisia-Libya - CILG-VNGI. This collaboration has been of great added value. Tunisian cities received their colleagues for trainings and sharing of knowledge, the peer reviews between Tunisians and Libyan colleagues were very fruitful.

Last but not least, one of our most important ingredients of success is the constructive relation we have with our donor, they think along, they believe in the value of flexibility and reactivity in the vulnerable context we work in. Through our program we have developed innovative ways for international cooperation for development that I hope can be inspiring for others.

As I said the list is too long, I lived every detail of it with passion. I can ensure you I was not bored a second!

I was also facing difficult decisions sometimes, I had my moments of frustration, being innovative and challenging the status quo has sometimes its price, but never a moment of doubt.

And as we take the time to express our gratitude for a fantastic 5 years gone by - we turn expectantly to the years that lies ahead.

We look forward to another wonderful 5 years, we are committed to serve the local governance cause with our knowledge and expertise - looking forward a time to build and strengthen forged relationships even further; a time to create and cherish even more shared memories and a time filled with dreams that are brought ever closer and milestones - whatever they may be - achieved.

As we celebrate our anniversary, I value even more, the special people that we are able to share this occasion with and the people who joined the adventure. CILG-VNGI has been backed by great team, people who have combined their creativity, diligence, and passion to support our products and services.

Thank you - one and all - for being beside us these past years..and may you be ever near in the years to come.