

# Press Release

## Communication Unit of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

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### **Ian Micallef: "Over the past fifty years, local democracy has taken solid root across Europe"**

Strasbourg, 11.01.2007 – "On 12 January 1957, the Conference of Local Authorities of Europe began its very first session in Strasbourg," stated Ian Micallef, President of the Local Authorities' Chamber of the Council of Europe Congress, in a declaration issued today.

"As we mark 50 years of local democracy in Europe, let us remember that it was the Council of Europe, through its Parliamentary Assembly and Committee of Ministers, which pioneered the laying-down of a political and legal basis for local democracy on our continent by creating the Conference of Local Authorities of Europe.

Over the years, this Conference evolved to become the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in 1994, with the main objective of reinforcing territorial democracy and safeguarding the values embedded in the European Charter of Local Self-Government. One of these values is the principle of subsidiarity, also recognised by the European Union in its Constitutional Treaty, according to which governance should be delivered at the level closest to the citizen.

Local democracy, the cornerstone of the democratic edifice, is an important element of democratic stability not only in Europe. We fully support the Declaration on Local Self-Government, which we hope will be adopted soon by the United Nations, as well as the added effort by the Committee of the Regions, restored by the European Union.

As we celebrate 50 years of local democracy in Europe, we must remember that without local democracy, there is no democracy at all", said Ian Micallef.

The Congress has two chambers, the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions.  
It brings together 315 full and 315 substitute members representing more than 200 000 European territorial communities.  
President of the Congress Halvdan Skard (Norway, SOC), President of the Chamber of Regions: Yavuz Milden (EPP/CD, Turkey),  
President of the Chamber of Local Authorities : Ian Micallef (Malta, EPP/CD).  
Political Groups : Socialist Group (SOC), Group of the European People's Party – Christian Democrats (EPP/CD),  
Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG).