

# Press Release

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

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### Congress holds a debate on domestic violence

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Strasbourg, 27.03.2007 - On Tuesday 27 March, during the spring session of the Congress, its Chamber of Local Authorities held a debate on domestic violence against women, as part of the Congress' contribution to the Council of Europe campaign "Stop domestic violence against women".

The debate was opened by the Council of Europe Secretary General Terry Davis, who stressed the particular importance of having a strong campaign at the local and regional level because it is the level closest to the people. "Central governments develop strategies, Parliaments adopt laws, but local councillors and officials are the ones who are most likely to encounter both the victims and the perpetrators of violence. That is why local and regional authorities have a key role in identifying and implementing effective prevention and protection measures," he said.

Fabienne Keller, Mayor of Strasbourg, spoke of her City's determination to break silence surrounding domestic violence. "The City of Strasbourg is determined to work with its partners to encourage women to tell their stories, witnesses to speak up and friends and relations to take action and report situations that come to their notice", concluded Ms Keller.

Chris Green, Executive Director of the "White Ribbon Campaign", pointed out the importance of involving local community leaders in the campaign. "Young people need role models to prevent them from violent behaviour," stressed Mr Green.

The debate was followed by the inauguration of a photographic exhibition "Breaking the silence on domestic violence", opened by the Secretary General and Congress President Halvdan Skard, in the presence of Fabienne Keller. "For far too long we have been turning a deaf ear to the screams from behind closed doors and drawn curtains. This must stop. We all must raise our voice and say loud and clear: Domestic violence is not a private matter. Domestic violence is a crime," underscored President Skard in his speech.

The ceremony ended with the departure of a vintage car from the forecourt of the Palais for a tour of European cities, as part of the awareness campaign against domestic violence, and a speech by Valerio Prignachi, President of the Congress Committee on Social Cohesion, who said: "We chose the vintage car as the original way of communicating the message, which will allow us to reach many people in several European countries".

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 Mildon (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).