

Press Release

Communication Unit of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

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Congress/Committee of the Regions observation mission stresses the importance of Kosovo elections for local democracy in the region

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Pristina, 18.11.2007 – A delegation of the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, which has been joined by four representatives of the EU Committee of the Regions, participated in the Fifth Council of Europe Elections Observation Mission, and observed the elections for the Assembly, municipal councils and mayors of Kosovo on 17 November.

The delegation was led by Ludmila Sfirloaga (Romania, SOC), Vice President of the Congress. The Committee of the Regions (CoR) was represented by Uno Aldegren (Sweden, PSE), President of the External Relations and Decentralised Co-operation Commission, Franz Schausberger (Austria, PPE), Heini Utunen Ziv (Finland, ALDE), and Uno Silberg (Estonia, UEN/AE). Joe Conway (Ireland, ILDG), member of the Congress, is Rapporteur on this issue

The members of the delegation were deployed throughout Kosovo. L. Sfirloaga, J. Conway, U. Aldegren and F. Schausberger remained in Pristina, where they had meetings with representatives of international organisations, leaders of the major political entities, and representatives of the association of Kosovo municipalities. On Election Day, they observed the polling in Pristina and the surroundings.

A press release and a general statement on the observation mission have been issued at a press conference held on 18 November. Congress and CoR representatives underlined the importance of these elections for local democracy and development of the region.

This joint mission of the Congress and of the Committee of the Regions responds to the commitment of the two European Assemblies of local and regional elected representatives to strengthening local and regional democracy in Europe. It is also a concrete demonstration of the implementation of the Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Congress and the CoR in 2005.

As part of its mission for monitoring local and regional democracy in European countries, the Bureau of the Congress will adopt a report on the observation of the elections in Kosovo at its meeting on 17 December. Subsequently, in the framework of a general debate on the situation in Kosovo, a resolution and a recommendation will be adopted at the Congress Spring Session (March 2008).

On the other hand, the Committee of the Regions will evaluate the outcome of this mission on the occasion of the 4th meeting of the Working Group on Western Balkans which will take place on the Committee of the Regions' premises in Brussels on 20 November. The experience the CoR observers will contribute to the drafting of the future opinion concerning the region of Western Balkans.

The Congress will be observing the second round of mayoral elections on 8 December 2007.

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The Congress has two chambers, the Chamber of Local Authorities and the Chamber of Regions. It brings together 318 full and 318 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 Meldon (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).