

Press Release

Communication Unit of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

Ref:162a08

Tel : +33 3 90 21 49 36

Fax : +33 3 88 41 27 51

congress.com@coe.int

www.coe.int/congress



47 members

Albania
Andorra
Armenia
Austria
Azerbaijan
Belgium
Bosnia and
Herzegovina
Bulgaria
Croatia
Cyprus
Czech Republic
Denmark
Estonia
Finland
France
Georgia
Germany
Greece
Hungary
Iceland
Ireland
Italy
Latvia
Liechtenstein
Lithuania
Luxembourg
Malta
Moldova
Monaco
Montenegro
Netherlands
Norway
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russia
San Marino
Serbia
Slovakia
Slovenia
Spain
Sweden
Switzerland
"the former Yugoslav
Republic of
Macedonia"
Turkey
Ukraine
United Kingdom

Congress Spring Session: Territorial authorities as key actors in sustainable development, City Diplomacy and local and regional democracy in Spain and Turkey

Strasbourg, 05.03.2008 – Local and regional policies on adaptation to climate change, sustainable consumption, urban biodiversity policies, and services of general interest in rural areas are the main items on the agenda of the Congress' Spring Session in Malaga, Spain, on 13 and 14 March 2008. The session includes debates on the situation of local and regional democracy in Spain and in Turkey, inter-regional co-operation in the Black Sea basin, European Urban Charter II, the development of City Diplomacy, and reports on the observation of elections in Kosovo (Serbia) and the Republika Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina).

On **13 March** (afternoon), Halvdan Skard, President of the Congress, and Francisco de la Torre Prados, Mayor of Malaga, will open the joint sitting of the Standing Committee and the Committee on Sustainable Development. The session will then debate sustainable consumption, based on a report by Valery Kadokhov (Russian Federation, SOC), stressing that local and regional authorities can make a considerable contribution towards changing collective and individual behaviour in favour of responsible and ethical consumption of goods and services. Antero Honkasalo, Director of Environmental Protection in Trade and Industry of the Finnish Ministry of Environment, will take part in the discussions. Another debate, on adaptation to climate change, will focus on a report by Svetlana Orlova (Russian Federation, EPP/CD) and Ingrid Franzen (Germany, SOC), which points to the need for resolute public action to strengthen the adaptive capacity of local and regional authorities in order to protect people, property and resources and generally to decrease vulnerability to the consequences of meteorological hazards. Jerzy Zajakala, President of the Committee for Sustainable Development of the EU Committee of the Regions, will participate in this debate.

The Congress will also discuss the evolution of local and regional democracy in Spain since the Congress recommendation of 2002, with the participation of Maria Tena, Director General for Local Administration in the Ministry of Public Administration, and local and regional democracy in Turkey, with the participation of Zekeriya Şarbak, Deputy Under-Secretary in the Ministry of Interior responsible for local and regional governments.

The need to encourage innovative forms of organisation and delivery of public services in rural areas, in order to maintain populations and ensure their economic and sustainable development, is the main thrust of a report by Claudette Abela Baldacchino (Malta, SOC) and Michael Neureiter (Austria, EPP/CD), to be debated in the Chamber of Regions. Among the participants in the debate will be Juan Ignacio Soto Valle, Honorary President of UDITE; Patrice Collignon, President of the "Countryside and Environment" INGOs Grouping to the Council of Europe (France); and Claude Tremouille, Regional Councillor in charge of agriculture and rural development in the Regional Council of Limousin (France). The Chamber will also discuss interregional cooperation in the Black Sea, and hold an exchange of views with Alexander Filipenko, Governor of the Khanty-Mansiysk Autonomous Okrug - Yugra (Russian Federation).

.../.

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 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**).

The Chamber of Local Authorities will examine reports on City Diplomacy as a tool for local governments to promote conflict prevention and resolution and post-conflict reconstruction, prepared by Onno van Veldhuizen (Netherlands, ILDG); integration through sport, by Wolfgang Schuster, (Germany, EPP/CD); and protection and extension of urban biodiversity as a responsibility of territorial authorities, by Willy Borsus (Belgium, ILDG). Wim Deetman, Councillor at the Council of State (Netherlands) and Claude Frey, President of the North-South Centre, will take part in the debate on City Diplomacy, and Josep Mayoral i Antigas, Mayor of Granollers (Spain), in the debate on biodiversity policies for urban areas. Carlos Alberto Pinto (Portugal, EPP/CD) will also be presenting his report on European Urban Charter II.

Meeting on **14 March**, the Standing Committee will hear communications by Vladimir Čečot, State Secretary in the Slovak Ministry of Interior, representing the Slovak Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers; by Miljenko Doric (Croatia), President of the Parliamentary Assembly's Sub-Committee on Local and Regional Democracy, on the Sub-Committee's work; and by Ignacio Niño, General Coordinator of "Madrid Global" (Spain), on the European Local Democracy Week (15 October 2008).

The Committee will also examine reports on the observation of elections in Kosovo (Serbia) and the Republika Srpska (Bosnia and Herzegovina), and will hold a debate on decentralisation in Spain, with the participation of Mayor of Malaga Francisco de la Torre Prados, the President of the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces Pedro Castro Vazquez, and Rosa Torres, Councillor for Culture in the Regional Council of Andalusia.

For more information: www.coe.int/congress-session/en

Press contact :

Dmitri Marchenkov, Head of the Congress Communication Unit

Tel. +33 3 88 41 38 44 ; dmitri.marchenkov@coe.int