

# Press Release

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

Ref:167a08

Tel: : +33 3 90 21 49 36

Fax : +33 3 88 41 27 51

congress.com@coe.int

www.coe.int/congress



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### Congress President on the occasion of International Women's Day: "Participation of women in public life is key to the economic and social success of our communities"

Strasbourg, 07.03.2008 – "If we are to achieve a society based on equality, it is essential that local and regional governments take the gender dimension fully into account, in their policies and their practices," stressed Halvdan Skard, President of the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities on the occasion of the International Women's Day, 8 March.

"The real equality of women and men is also key to our economic and social success - not just at European or national levels, but also in our regions, towns and local communities," he continued. "In this respect, the Congress has been calling for the removal of obstacles to women's participation in political life, raising awareness of the importance of gender mainstreaming in the media and through education at all levels.

"The Congress has been actively working to enhance women's participation in public and political life at local and regional level for a long time. Since 2005, we have stepped up our efforts to increase the proportion of elected female representatives in municipal and regional councils, and the new Charter of the Congress, adopted by the Committee of Ministers in May 2007, now requires that the proportion of women in all national delegations to the Congress be at least 30 per cent. The Congress' 2008 plenary session on 27-29 May in Strasbourg will be the first session at which this quota is enforced," said President Skard.

**Press contact : Dmitri Marchenkov**, Head of the Congress Communication Unit  
Tel. +33 3 88 41 38 44 ; [dmitri.marchenkov@coe.int](mailto:dmitri.marchenkov@coe.int)

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).