

Press Release

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Ratification by Montenegro of the European Local Self-Government Charter will strengthen local democracy in this country, says Ian Micallef

Strasbourg, 16.09.2008 – "On behalf of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, I welcome the ratification by Montenegro of the European Charter of Local Self-Government which, I am sure, will serve the consolidation of local democracy in this country," stated Ian Micallef, President of the Congress Chamber of Local Authorities, in a declaration issued today.

"It is symbolic that the ratification comes only days after the twentieth anniversary of the Charter's entry into force, on 1 September," he said. "Today as twenty years ago, the Charter remains the cornerstone international treaty for local self-government, reflecting our conviction that local democracy is a constituent element of democracy itself. With its ratification, local authorities in Montenegro will now have a legal basis for defending their rights and expanding their competences.

"Montenegro is the 44th country to ratify the European Charter of Local Self-Government. I call on Andorra, Monaco and San Marino, the three Council of Europe member states which have not yet done so, to speed up their ratification of the Charter," stressed President Micallef.

The Charter, adopted by the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers in 1985, recognises local self-government as a right of communities to manage their own affairs. It lays down the rights of local authorities and principles of local self-government, including the principle of subsidiarity – that the responsibility for public services should be transferred to the level where they can be delivered most efficiently, the level closest to the citizen.

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 : Yavuz Milden (Turkey, EPP/CD), President of the Chamber of Regions: Ludmila Sfirloaga (Romania, SOC),

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**).