

# Media Advisory

## Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

Communication Division

Ref: MA020a09

Tel. +33 (0)3 90 21 49 36

Fax +33 (0)3 88 41 27 51

Internet: [www.coe.int/congress](http://www.coe.int/congress)

e-mail: [congress.com@coe.int](mailto:congress.com@coe.int)



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Strasbourg, 02.03.2009

## Water management and local authorities: Congress to adopt its contribution to the World Water Forum

**Date:** Tuesday 3 March (afternoon)

**Location:** Hemicycle of the Council of Europe, Strasbourg (France)

**Description:** The Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities will hold a debate on public water and sewer services to finalise its contribution to the 5<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum, which is taking place in Istanbul on 15-16 March 2009. Hasan Zuhuri Sarikaya (Turkey), Co-Chair of the World Water Forum, will take part in the debate, which will focus on the report by Vladimir Gorodetsky (Russian Federation, SOC) and Piet Jansen (Netherlands, EPP/CD).

Water is an essential public good and an indispensable ecological, economic and social component of sustainable development, and today water management represents a major global challenge. In this context, local authorities are in the best position to assess local needs and resources required to meet them, decide in the most efficient manner in which water services should be delivered, and take into account the economic, social and environmental implications of their decisions for local communities.

The key role of local authorities in water management was recognised for the first time at the 4<sup>th</sup> World Water Forum in Mexico City in March 2006, when their contribution was integrated into the final documents of the Forum. To make sure that this recognition is reaffirmed at the Forum in Istanbul, the Congress:

- calls for the active participation of local and regional authorities in order to highlight their fundamental role in the organisation of public water and sewer services and to ensure that their freedom to choose between different management models is respected;
- appeals for the fostering of a genuine culture of responsibility in managing water and sewer services, which reasserts the role of local and regional authorities;
- asserts that legal responsibility for services should be maintained at the level closest to the citizen;
- asks governments to recognise the legitimacy of local and regional authorities as the appropriate tier of responsibility and co-operation and to encourage the NGOs working to decentralise and improve services in less advanced countries to do so in partnership with local and regional authorities so as to boost their capacity for action.

**More information:** [www.coe.int/congress-session](http://www.coe.int/congress-session)

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).