

Press Release

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

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Congress President a.i.: "World Water Forum results do not rise to the crucial challenges of water management"

Strasbourg, 24.03.2009 – "I deplore the fact that the Ministerial Declaration, adopted at the 5th World Water Forum in Istanbul on 22 March, fails to recognise the role and responsibility of local, regional or national elected representatives in water management," stated Ian Micallef, President a.i. of the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, in the wake of the Istanbul Forum.

"The Declaration overlooks the need to get local and regional authorities involved as key players in water management and sanitation in their communities and makes no reference to the Istanbul Water Consensus, adopted by 250 mayors and representatives of the world's towns, cities and regions. Yet, local and regional authorities are best placed to assess the needs of their communities and decide on the optimal use of water resources and the management method. As such, they are major stakeholders in national and international policy-making on water management, which was recognised in the Mexico Declaration, adopted at the 4th World Water Forum in 2006.

"In a press release of 20 March 2009, the Congress and the international associations United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) expressed their grave concern about the content of the Ministerial Declaration, which they regarded as a significant retreat for local authorities in comparison to the Mexico Declaration. Despite the converging views of a very large number of local and regional authorities and national governments, the Declaration that was finally adopted confirmed that the concerns expressed on 20 March were justified.

"This Declaration is particularly alarming as it does not take account of the responsibilities of elected representatives and of civil society, and makes no reference to the Istanbul Water Consensus or the fundamental right to water and sanitation.

The 5th World Water Forum ended with hopes and commitments but also with considerable concern among local and regional authorities and civil society organisations. The Istanbul Declaration lacks ambition, and the results of the Forum do not rise to the crucial challenges that water management poses," concluded President a.i. Micallef.

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 Sfîrloaga (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).