

Press Release

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

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International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women

Sandra Barnes: "I urge all territorial authorities to commit themselves to fighting violence against women"

Strasbourg, 24.11.2009 – "Domestic violence is the main cause of death for women between the ages of 19 and 44 all over the world, ahead of war, cancer and road accidents," Sandra Barnes (United Kingdom, EPP/CD), Rapporteur on violence against women of the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, stated on the occasion of International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, 25 November.

"Combating violence against women is at the heart of what the Council of Europe is about – human rights and the equality of women and men. This fight must be a priority at every level, with local and regional elected representatives at the forefront. This is not a private but a public issue, and a matter of concern to all of us.

"Municipalities and regions can make a difference by taking a stand against domestic violence, by raising awareness and setting up special services, by providing shelters and housing for battered women, by supporting NGOs specialised in this area or taking educational opportunities to openly discuss these issues with young people.

"The Congress has recently adopted a report and is participating in the drafting of a Council of Europe convention on violence against women. But legal texts alone are not enough. The culture itself has to be changed. We must send a clear message that violence will not be tolerated and make sure that its perpetrators are punished.

"I urge all local and regional elected representatives to make this fight a personal commitment. There is always strength in numbers, and there is always hope for change when right is on our side. Together we **can** overcome."

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).