

Press Release

Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

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After Copenhagen, cities and regions must take up the challenge of climate change

Strasbourg, 18.03.2010 – At the Copenhagen Summit on climate change, States failed to reach a binding agreement. Cities and regions, which can implement 50 to 80 per cent of the measures needed to reduce climate change effects, must take up the challenge and influence their governments to make a new deal at the conference in Mexico in December 2010.

This is the message of the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, following a debate on the implications of the Copenhagen Summit for local and regional authorities. The debate, held on 18 March 2010 in Strasbourg as part of the Congress' 18th Session, was opened by Vice-President Dubravka Suica (Croatia, L, EPP/CD), who headed the Congress delegation in Copenhagen in December 2009. "The onus is on local and regional authorities to continue to lead the way where central governments have failed," she said. "We must join forces to see a deal reached in Cancun, Mexico, in December 2010 that takes into account the ecological, economic, ethical and human rights dimensions of this issue."

Deputy Mayor of Copenhagen Klaus Bondam, who took part in the debate, pointed out that cities and sub-national governments around the world are already committed to achieving ambitious reduction targets. "Since the World Mayors' and Local Governments' Climate Protection Agreement reached in 2007, cities and local governments have effectively shown the ability to influence their national authorities and the international agenda, advocating for an agreement where their key role in climate change is recognised. The Congress' resolution is a vital and important step towards even further coordination, in the preparation for a Mexican Deal at the conference in December," he said.

In the adopted resolution, Congress members stressed that cities and regions are taking a lead in adaptation strategies and in the fight against global warming. Their action is all the more vital as national governments did not take any binding decisions in Copenhagen.

In the recommendation to governments, Congress members called for the formal recognition of the role of local and regional authorities, their inclusion in the negotiating process and support for their action on climate. National authorities should learn from cities and regions which transcend their political, geographical and demographic differences to make a joint commitment. A binding global climate agreement is no longer an option but a moral and political imperative, underlines the recommendation.

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).