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International Roma Day: Congress President calls for constant dialogue at the grassroots level to avoid discrimination and marginalisation

Strasbourg, 5 April 2012. – In view of International Roma Day on 8 April that brings attention to challenges Roma people continue to face in Europe, Keith Whitmore, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, underlined the role of territorial self-government bodies for the implementation of inclusive and socially responsible Roma policies:

“Since in many Council of Europe countries, the local and regional authorities are in charge of housing, social care and educational establishments, local politicians do have a specific responsibility in this respect. Through constant dialogue with all relevant stakeholders, it should be possible to achieve pragmatic solutions to provide Roma people equal access to housing, healthcare, education and jobs. At the same time, the readiness to engage in dialogue is fundamental to fight discrimination and marginalisation and to build bridges across different parts of our society. Together with our partners, the Congress is currently establishing a new network for Roma inclusion at the grassroots level, which was conceived at last year’s European Summit of Mayors in Strasbourg and will be launched in September”, Mr Whitmore concluded.

[Website of the Alliance of Cities and Regions for Roma Inclusion](#)

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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: Keith Whitmore (United Kingdom, ILDG), President of the Chamber of Regions: Herwig van Staa (Austria, EPP/CD), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Jean-Claude Frécon (France, SOC)

Political Groups: Socialist Group (SOC), Group of the European People’s Party – Christian Democrats (EPP/CD), Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG).