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The Congress delegation's high-level meeting to Ukraine comes to its conclusion in Odessa

Odessa, 18 July 2014 - During its high-level meeting to Ukraine on 17 and 18 July, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities' delegation, headed by its President Herwig van Staa (Austria, EPP/CCE) and comprising Jean-Claude Frécon (France, SOC) and Nataliya Romanova (Ukraine, ILDG), respectively Presidents of the Chamber of Local Authorities and of the Chamber of Regions, as well as the Presidents of the Congress political groups and the Rapporteur on Ukraine, held a large number of interviews in Kyiv and Odessa.

The delegation met with government representatives, including Volodymyr Groysman, Vice Prime-Minister and Ukrainian Minister of Regional Development, Construction and Municipal Economy, Maryna Stavniychuk, Advisor to the President of Ukraine as well as Ruslan Koshulynskiy, Deputy Chairman of the Ukrainian Parliament. In addition, the delegation met with Vitali Klitschko, Mayor of Kyiv, and Mustafa Djemilev, leader of the Tatar community of Crimea. On 18 July, the delegation travelled to Odessa and held a series of exchanges with Guennadiy Trukhanov, Mayor of Odessa, representatives of the Regional Council of Odessa, as well as with members of the Ukrainian delegation to the Congress and other elected representatives including the Mayor of Donetsk, Olexandr Lukyanchenko.

"We have been able to get a complete picture of the current situation in Ukraine and of the major difficulties this country is going through", declared President van Staa. "The delegation understands that the reforms in Ukraine will not be able to be fully implemented until the problem of territorial integrity and its dramatic consequences are solved." He particularly underlined the situation of municipalities which have to deal with a massive influx of displaced persons and often, tragically, the arrival of dead bodies, as well as having to organise and finance housing, schooling, and employment".

President van Staa concluded: "Our delegation has appreciated the willingness the government has shown to reform; we particularly welcome the fact that first steps have been taken, such as the election of mayors - despite these difficult circumstances - which are fully in line with Congress recommendations and clearly illustrate the government's commitment in this respect.

The President reiterated his invitation to Volodymyr Groysman and Vitali Klitschko to address the forthcoming Congress session on 16 October 2014.

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: Herwig Van Staa (Austria, EPP/DC), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Jean-Claude Frécon (France, SOC), President of the Chamber of Regions: Nataliya Romanova (Ukraine, IDLG)

Political Groups: Socialist Group (SOC), Group of the European People's Party – Christian Democrats (EPP/CD), Independent and Liberal Democrat Group (ILDG), European Conservatives & Reformists Group (ECR)