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Ref. CG-PR 040(2014)

Autonomy, resources and responsibilities: priorities according to Armenian local elected representatives

Strasbourg, 17 September 2014 – Over 150 mayors and municipal councillors from all the provinces (*marzes*) in Armenia came together at two seminars on “Fostering local democracy in Armenia” held by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe in Gyumri and Sisian, Armenia, on 9 and 11 September 2014. They discussed measures which could be taken at central and local level with a view to effective implementation of the Congress recommendations adopted in March 2014.

The priority requests emerging from the discussions included the need for administrative reorganisation, increased financial resources, greater autonomy for local authorities and broader responsibilities for local authorities and community councils. These points will be set out in a “Call to the government of Armenia” and could serve as the basis for a programme of reforms.

“Consolidating territorial governance and merging small local authorities into larger municipalities would help resolve the structural problem of local governance in Armenia”, said Nigel Mermagen, Congress rapporteur for Armenia, when presenting the conclusions of the report and the main Congress recommendation to the participants.

“The constitutional reforms currently under discussion provide a unique opportunity for moving forward the local government system in Armenia, after six years without any real progress. The various authorities at central and local level now agree about the need for reforms. We must seize this opportunity,” said Emin Yeritsyan, Chair of the Communities Association of Armenia and head of the Armenian delegation to the Congress.

At the same time, the Armenian local elected representatives expressed their concern about the effectiveness of the “pilot clusters” model adopted by the government in order to achieve a comprehensive administrative reform of local and regional government in the country.

Representatives of local authority associations, civil society and several international organisations active in the area of local democracy also took part in the seminars. The discussions focused on the five themes of the principle of subsidiarity, finances and taxation, territorial organisation, the role of community councils and citizen participation.

Armenia ratified the European Charter of Local Self-Government on 25 January 2002 and its additional Protocol on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority on 13 May 2013. Countries which have ratified the Charter are bound by its provisions. The Charter imposes compliance with a minimum number of rights, which

are the European bedrock of local self-government. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe ensures respect for these principles.

Congress texts on local democracy in Armenia:

- [Recommendation 351 \(2014\)](#)
- [Report CPL\(26\)2](#)
- [European Charter of Local Self-Government](#)

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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: 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)