

Press Release

Communication Unit of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

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Congress President calls on Israeli authorities to stop expropriation of land of Palestinian communities

Malaga, Spain, 12.03.2008 - On the occasion of the Spring Session of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in Malaga, Spain, Congress President Halvdan Skard has made the following statement on the situation in the Middle East:

"There can be no solution to the crisis in the Middle East without a genuine peace process which, in turn, cannot be sustained without the cessation of hostilities from both sides and a stop to the expropriation of land for building more settlements - the land of local Palestinian communities.

On the behalf of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, I appeal to the Israeli authorities to rescind their decisions on the expropriation of land and create the necessary conditions for restarting the negotiating process. The 60th anniversary of the State of Israel which is being marked these days is an excellent occasion to do so, to show the goodwill for reconciliation and peace.

For its part, the Council of Europe Congress stands ready to offer a platform for cooperation between the Union of Local Authorities in Israel (ULAI) and the Association of Palestinian Local Authorities (APLA), both of which enjoy observer status with the Congress, and to launch peace initiatives and confidence-building measures between Israeli and Palestinian communities. These efforts can also be backed by European municipalities in the framework of City Diplomacy, a report on which the Congress will be debating during this Session."

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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 Halvdan Skard (Norway, SOC), President of the Chamber of Regions: Yavuz Milden (EPP/CD, Turkey),
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).