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The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities adopts a report on local and regional democracy in Turkey

Strasbourg, 25.03.2011 – The Congress recommends that Turkey pursue constitutional reforms with regard to decentralisation, as emphasised in a monitoring report on local and regional democracy in Turkey, adopted by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe on 24 March 2011, following an extended debate.

The report, presented by Anders Knape, Sweden (EPP/CD) and Herwig Van Staa, Austria (EPP/CD), follows visits to Turkey carried out in 2008, 2009 and 2010, and a fact-finding mission sent to South-East Anatolia in 2007. It continues the monitoring of Turkey's obligations according to the European Charter of Local Self-Government that was undertaken in 2005. Anders Knape, however, regretted the lack of political dialogue with Turkish authorities during the preparation of the report.

In an associated recommendation, the Congress called on the Turkish authorities to abolish administrative tutelage and to allow the use of languages other than Turkish in the provision of public services. Turkey was encouraged to reduce the involvement of Governors in Special Provincial Administrations, and to implement the planned reforms, particularly the Villages Law and the Law on Revenues.

The ongoing detention of 1,500 politicians in South-East Anatolia, including Congress member Leyla Güven and many other local elected representatives, was also discussed. The Assembly expressed concern for the consequences of this situation on local and regional democracy in Turkey.

In this context, the Congress Bureau confirmed that a delegation would be sent to Turkey to meet Ms Güven, and to inform itself of the situation of the other local and regional elected representatives who are still imprisoned.

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-Paul 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).