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Jewish cemeteries: the Congress calls on local authorities to shoulder their responsibilities

Strasbourg, 26 March 2015 – Jewish cemeteries are an integral part of the European cultural heritage and must be protected from damage and desecration. The members of the Chamber of Local Authorities of the Congress of the Council of Europe reaffirmed this point at their 28th session in Strasbourg in adopting a resolution on the responsibility of local authorities.

The Congress asks local authorities in the 47 Council of Europe member states to promote the preservation of holy Jewish burial sites, for example by ensuring that urban planning projects are supervised in order to avoid the violation or deterioration of those sites, and to take the necessary steps within their responsibilities to protect them.

The resolution also calls on them to engage in dialogue with heritage preservation associations and the representatives of Jewish communities, to draw on the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society ("Faro Convention") and to encourage their local authorities to join the Council of Europe's Enlarged Partial Agreement on Cultural Routes, which, among other things, would offer them the opportunity to participate in the European Route of Jewish Heritage. The Congress considers that these provisions apply under the same terms to the cemeteries of all other religious communities.

"The Congress has always defended the right to freedom of religion and religious expression. The protection of human dignity and the preservation of the deceased in a manner compatible with their religion is an important part of this freedom. Local and regional authorities have a role to play in the protection, preservation, management and maintenance of these burial sites because they are also part of our history", stressed the Congress rapporteur, John Warmisham (United Kingdom, SOC), in introducing the resolution.

This resolution echoes the one adopted by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in 2012, which called on local authorities to act on this matter.

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[Mendel Samama, Rabbi of Strasbourg, France](#)

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: Jean-Claude Frécon (France, SOC), President of the Chamber of Local Authorities: Anders Knappe (Sweden, EPP/CCE), President of the Chamber of Regions: Gudrun Mosler-Törnström (Austria, SOC)

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)