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Human rights at local level: main theme of European Local Democracy Week 2011

Strasbourg, 11.02.2011 - In order to consolidate links between citizens and their local elected representatives and to strengthen the process of participation in local public life, the local and regional communities of the Council of Europe's 47 member states are invited to hold a variety of events and activities in the context of European Local Democracy Week (ELDW). The Week takes place in October each year throughout Europe, on a theme of major importance to local authorities.

On the occasion of the annual co-ordination meeting held in Brussels (Belgium) on 8 February 2011, it was decided to make "Human rights at local level" the main theme for the 2011 Week.

The local dimension of human rights, which is a focal point of Congress priorities for 2011-2012, will thus be the theme running through this year's Week. "Realisation of these rights is undeniably a priority, if we want to promote more inclusive communities and to ensure social cohesion and good local governance. The holding of ELDW also plays its part in achieving the fundamental objectives of the Council of Europe and its Congress of Local and Regional Authorities", said John Warmisham (United Kingdom, SOC), a member of the Congress and the new political co-ordinator for ELDW.

The conditions for taking part in ELDW and full information for participants are available from www.coe.int/demoweeek. Suggestions as to how authorities can reflect the human rights theme will also be available from the site from March 2011 onwards.

When European Local Democracy Week 2010 took place, over 130 local authorities took up the invitation. In 2011, the Congress would like to expand this participation still further and involve the greatest possible number of local and regional authorities from the 47 member states.

European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) is an event co-ordinated by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe. It takes place annually on a date around 15 October, the anniversary of the opening for signature in 1985 of the European Charter for Local Self-Government. The local and regional authorities taking part organise simultaneous events in the 47 Council of Europe member states to promote citizens' participation at local level and to strengthen local democracy.

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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: 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).

