



T +33(0)390215240

[www.coe.int/congress](http://www.coe.int/congress)

[congress.com@coe.int](mailto:congress.com@coe.int)

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## **2<sup>nd</sup> Euro-Arab Cities Forum calls for immediate cessation of crimes against humanity**

Strasbourg, 2 March 2011. – Discussions on deeper co-operation between European and Arab municipalities and on the current upheavals and changes in the southern Mediterranean were on the agenda of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Euro-Arab Cities Forum, held on 25-26 February in Malaga (Spain). As in Dubai in 2008, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe was co-organiser of this event, bringing together some 150 participants from more than 30 countries, notably with the participation of UN High Representative and former Portuguese President Jorge Sampaio.

In a declaration adopted on 26 February and published today, the Forum demanded the immediate cessation of all crimes against humanity perpetrated against the civilian population in those countries. "In this context we commit ourselves to pursuing our action in order to guarantee peace in our countries", declared the participants and underlined their support of a participatory conception of modern democracy. "As the representatives of authorities that are closest to the people, we are ready to build a new model of participation of the citizens for the best development of our region."

The Forum reaffirmed its commitment to continue dialogue and cooperation between European and Euro-Arab cities and called on partner countries to use devolution to promote economic, social and territorial development in the region. "As a platform for improving partnership relations among European and Arab cities, at this particular time, the Forum is of the utmost importance for advancing the democratic development of our communities, exchanging and applying best practices and expertise, as well as providing assistance and support for improving standards of good local governance, living conditions in our communities and services to our citizens."

Also, the Forum underlined the importance of promoting the effective participation of citizens, in particular of young people and women, in cities' governance. It recognised the necessity to make further efforts for the preservation of the environment and for achieving a good balance between the economic, social and environmental dimension of territorial policies.

Launched in 2008, the Euro-Arab Cities Forum is organised every three years by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) the Standing Committee for the Euro Mediterranean Partnership of Local and Regional Authorities (COPPEM), the Arab Towns Organization (ATO), in co-operation with the host city.

Forum website: [www.euroarabforum.es](http://www.euroarabforum.es)

Special file on the Congress website: [www.coe.int/euro-arab-forum](http://www.coe.int/euro-arab-forum)

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).

