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Congress starts European co-operation initiative on local and regional democracy with Tirana seminar

Strasbourg, 26.09.2011. – In the framework of its new action to support European local and regional elected representatives and improve their leadership capacities, the Congress starts with a seminar for newly elected mayors and Chairs of municipality councils on 28 September in Tirana (Albania).

Dialogue building in the politically pluralistic society in Albania will be at the centre of this seminar which has been jointly organised by the Congress and NALAS, the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South East Europe, with the support of the Swiss Co-operation Office Albania and the OSCE presence in this country. The list of participants in this event also includes Presidents of national associations of municipalities from the NALAS network and other European local government associations as well as Congress members, headed by President Keith Whitmore.

"After the local elections of 8 May, the political situation in Albania remained tense. This seminar – which, while constituting the starting point of an initiative for Congress - aims at developing a climate of confidence between political groups in the interest of good governance and enhancement of local self-government in Albania. Through this new initiative, the Congress seeks to strengthen leadership by local and regional elected representatives, making them aware of their role and responsibilities at grassroots level," says Congress President Keith Whitmore.

The programme of the Tirana seminar includes a presentation on the challenges of decentralisation in Albania as well as working groups on the dialogue between majority and opposition and with central government and parliament.

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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-Claude 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).