

13th European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) (Ljubljana, Slovenia: 16-17 September 2003) on "Implementation of strategies and visions for sustainable spatial development of the European continent"

Ljubljana Declaration on the territorial dimension of sustainable development

adopted by the ministers responsible for regional planning at the 13th session of the European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT), in Ljubljana, on 17 September 2003

We, the ministers of the member states of the Council of Europe attending the 13th session of the European Conference of Ministers Responsible for Regional Planning in Ljubljana on 16 and 17 September 2003, having examined the document on the basis for this declaration and considering:

the devotion of the Council of Europe to the protection and promotion of human rights, to the rule of law and to pluralist democracy, put into concrete form by various European conventions and charters,

the commitment of the Council of Europe and particularly of CEMAT to the goal of sustainable development, reconfirmed through the Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent, adopted by the 12th session of CEMAT in 2000 and recommended in 2002 to the member states by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe (Rec(2002)1),

the ever-present environmental and other problems, related to spatial development, particularly those connected with the economic and social cohesion and sustainable and balanced development of Europe,

the particular geographical situation of our common Europe, presenting a variety of opportunities which can be realised through adequate policies and their accountable implementation in agreement, co-operation and solidarity between the people and authorities of our states, regions and local communities,

the ongoing processes of European integration – accession of new member states to the Council of Europe and the greatest enlargement of the European

Union since its foundation – which are important steps in the building of Europe-wide cohesion,

our readiness to continue to promote an integrated approach to territorial cohesion through a more balanced social and economic development of regions and improved competitiveness, which respects the diversity and uniqueness of Europe,

our will that Europe contributes also to the sustainable development of its geographical neighbourhood in the East and South and at the global level,

the role of local and regional authorities of Europe in the implementation of the principles of sustainability,

adopt the following declaration:

1. The concept of sustainable development has steadily risen in status throughout the 1990s and into the 21st century, in particular since the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, and was confirmed by the Johannesburg World Summit as an inescapable development paradigm and as a central element of the international agenda. But the still-differing interpretations of sustainable development and ways through which this goal could be achieved reflect a variety of aspirations or visions.

2. Sustainable development is not just an environmental issue. Three aspects of sustainable development have been agreed upon: economic sustainability, environmental sustainability and social sustainability. The first implies economic growth and development, the second includes ecosystem integrity and attention to carrying capacity and biodiversity, while the latter includes values such as equity, empowerment, accessibility and participation. In addition to these three components, the Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent introduced a fourth dimension: that of cultural sustainability.

3. The territory is a complex system, comprising not only urbanised, rural and other spaces, such as industrial land, but nature as a whole and the environment surrounding mankind. It is the ground support and indispensable framework of human dwelling and activity, and therefore the basis of sustainable development.

4. Inconsistent development policies cause risks, uncontrolled land speculation and unsustainable development. They are hazardous to the environment and to people themselves, as has been proved several times through human casualties and devastation caused by the disasters which have recently struck Europe – ranging from earthquakes and volcanic eruptions, droughts and floods, to great fires and black tides. Sustainable spatial development prevents or substantially diminishes these risks.

5. Numerous processes are challenging the sustainability of our common European future. These challenges are in particular related to:

the disparities in economic and social development between Europe and some of its neighbours and among European regions, sometimes coinciding with administrative borders, and within regions, enhancing the risk of various-speed development;

the accentuation of social inequalities, the extent of poverty and uneven accessibility to essential goods and services, generating marginalisation and exclusion;

the deterioration of the environment, the degradation of settled areas and the malfunction of physical and social infrastructure and services in considerable parts of Europe because of economic decline or war, causing, *inter alia*, unwanted migration, including of refugees;

the intensification of transport flows, congestion of road traffic and related deterioration of the environment;

the more frequent occurrence of natural and man-made hazards, partly caused by climatic changes, endangering human life and generating severe damage;

the loss of vitality and quality of life in numerous rural areas, including depopulation, transformation and loss of traditional rural landscapes and way of life, natural resources and rural heritage;

the necessity to revitalise cities and contain urban sprawl, and reduce the threat to cultural identity and collective traditions of European living, settlement types and heritage.

6. To manage adequately the major challenges for sustainable spatial development of the European continent, relevant policies must be further improved, in order to:

reduce disparities, particularly through a more balanced and effective territorial location of activities, infrastructure and services in order to improve their accessibility;

support the balanced polycentric development of the European continent and the formation of functional urban regions, including the networks of small and medium-sized towns and of rural settlements;

provide measures for the revitalisation of declining settlements and for the redevelopment of brownfield sites in order to contain land consumption, reduce social deprivation and unemployment, and improve the quality of urban life;

increase the efficiency of transport and energy networks, and minimise their adverse impacts, particularly by fostering public passenger transport and multi-modal solutions of cargo flows;

prevent and reduce the potential damage from natural hazards, particularly by making settlement patterns and structure less vulnerable;

protect and improve the natural and built environment, particularly where already polluted or degraded, or under threat of becoming such;

reduce the intensification, industrialisation and dependence upon chemistry of agricultural practice, and through spatial development policy allowing for diversified economic activity create new market opportunities for rural populations;

achieve a balance between preserving existing cultural heritage, attracting new investments and supporting existing living and working communities in urban and rural areas;

increase public participation in spatial development approaches and in conceiving and implementing spatial development policies.

7. Accordingly, since the adoption of the Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent at its 12th session in 2000, CEMAT has been contributing to improvement of a spatial development approach through the intensification of scientific and political discourse upon the most outstanding topics and questions of the balanced and sustainable development of Europe. It has been organising venues, bringing to important conclusions and guidelines, monitoring good examples of sustainable policies and following successful cases of transeuropean co-operation, as shown in the documents of its 13th session in 2003.

8. But, in order to achieve sustainability, spatial development policies should reach a substantially stronger trans-sectoral dimension. The spatial development approach involves co-operation between various sectors of activity, various levels of authorities and various stakeholders. Therefore it is an important policy

implementation tool, providing widely acceptable solutions. It allows for all public policies with territorial impacts to be scrutinised and assessed so as to strengthen and increase their synergies and the sustainability of their outcomes. But sectoral policies should fully integrate the dimension of sustainability themselves, particularly the central ones, such as transport, energy, agriculture and others.

9. The territorial impacts of development are wider than national, regional, local or any other administratively determined borders. Therefore transeuropean co-operation in the field of spatial planning, involving all levels of authorities, is indispensable and should be widely enhanced.

10. The enlargement of the European Union is a unique opportunity, but at the same time an ultimate necessity for the intensification of transeuropean co-operation in the field of spatial development. This is enacted through the co-operation of authorities of the old and the new member states of the European Union and of other states – members of the Council of Europe, for example – and for setting up co-operation in this field between Europeans and their neighbours on adjacent continents. New initiatives and funds have to be provided to enhance such co-operation, seen as an investment with far-reaching benefits, not only for the cohesion and balanced development of Europe, but also for its perspective in the globalising world.

11. Effective spatial development requires active participation and adaptation based on regional differences and local needs. The regional level of government strengthens development initiatives, and optimises their results through inter-regional co-operation. Within the framework of their tasks, local authorities can co-operate with each other, with authorities from their own country and, if the law allows, with those from other states. For matters which concern them, but which do not fall within their realm of power or responsibility, local and regional authorities should be involved or consulted as far as possible when decisions are taken.

12. Spatial development policies and spatial planning provide important tools for local and regional authorities. The interaction of political bodies, organs and parties, non-government organisations, professional and other unions and citizens in spatial development decision-making is an important factor in local and regional democracy. Local and regional authorities have competence in spatial planning and spatial development policy at their scale, they can have an important role in transeuropean co-operation and they can be very efficient in implementing spatial development policy at local and regional level.

We, the ministers of the member states of the Council of Europe responsible for regional/spatial planning, considering the universal importance of sustainable development, aware of the challenges to sustainability and recognising the importance of ongoing European integrations:

stress that the spatial development approach is an essential method of achieving the sustainable development objective;

commit ourselves to create synergies of activities in order to guarantee the sustainable development of the European continent, and to report each three years to the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe on the implementation of the Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent;

entrust the Committee of Senior Officials of CEMAT with defining the structure of our reporting and the indicators of follow-up, and establishing an assessment of progress in implementing the Guiding Principles for Sustainable Spatial Development of the European Continent;

invite the member states of the Council of Europe to support and enhance the role of spatial planning in their development policies, to promote horizontal and vertical co-operation within states and on a transeuropean level, and to co-operate in the framework of ESPON (the European Spatial Planning Observation Network);

convey the appeal to the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe, and to the European Union, to support the role of the spatial development approach at transeuropean level as an efficient way towards sustainability;

invite the European Union and the Council of Europe to enhance their co-operation in the field of spatial development and ask the European Commission to define tools which on the basis of experience of the Interreg, Phare, Tacis, Cards and Meda programmes would facilitate transeuropean co-operation between European and neighbouring countries in the field of spatial development in order to prevent divisions caused by unbalanced development;

invite the Committee of Ministers to take sustainable spatial development into consideration in the framework of the 3rd Council of Europe summit.