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SUMMER SESSION

Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee
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SYNOPSIS

FOR THE ATTENTION OF MEMBERS OF THE DEMOCRACY, SOCIAL COHESION AND GLOBAL CHALLENGES COMMITTEE

The Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee, meeting in Strasbourg on 25 June 2014 with Anne-Marie CHAVANON in the chair,

1. *Agenda*
Adopted the draft agenda.
2. *Synopsis*
Adopted the synopsis of the meeting held on 28 January 2014 [CONF/DEM(2014)SYN1].
3. *Activity report*
Adopted the 2013 activity report as it stood.
4. *European Local Democracy Week (ELDW) 2014*
“Participatory democracy: sharing, proposing, deciding”

Exchanged views about the arrangements for ELDW with Denis HUBER, Head of the Department for Co-operation, Administration and External Relations of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, accompanied by Orsolya GANCSOS, project assistant.

Denis HUBER said he had close ties with the Conference of INGOs, as he had been in charge of the award of participatory status to NGOs at the Committee of Ministers and then director of the North-South Centre. He underlined the growing success of European Local Democracy Week, which had been launched in 2007 and had been held in 28 countries, including some non-members of the Organisation such as Morocco and Tunisia, in 2013.

In view of the *“Sharing, proposing, deciding”* theme of the 2014 ELDW, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, as co-coordinator of the event, had invited policymakers to share the information at their disposal, citizens to make proposals and public authorities to involve civil society in the decision-making process.

In reply to the requests and suggestions by members of the committee, Denis HUBER agreed to the proposal to include in ELDW the Day for the Eradication of Poverty, which is to be held in Turin on 17 October 2014 and of which one of the objectives is the call to leave no one aside, especially the poorest, and to decide, to think and act together against poverty.

He said that communities could award themselves the **12-Star label** if they made five commitments: allocate a specific budget for ELDW, conduct a promotional campaign, organise

activities related to the theme, involve different groups of citizens and arrange an event with a European dimension.

He welcomed the proposal regarding workshops based on the Conference's committees and agreed to the request for the presentation documents needed for informing councillors whom committee members met.

=> The committee agreed to encourage the member NGOs to take initiatives illustrating the proposed theme. Activities could take place not only during the week from 13 to 19 October but also throughout October. [See the Congress site for registration of activities and events](#)

5. *World Forum for Democracy*

Was informed by Eladio FERNANDEZ-GALIANO, Head of the Democratic Initiatives Department and co-ordinator of the World Forum for Democracy, about arrangements for the event, which would be held from 3 to 5 November 2014 on the theme of "*From participation to influence: can youth revitalise democracy?*" The sub-themes would include the difficulties young people encountered in finding secure employment.

Noted the establishment of a steering committee for the future forums, which would include the President of the Conference of INGOs, Jean-Marie HEYDT, and the committee's vice-chair, Israel MENSAH.

=> The committee was asked to propose speakers for the labs supported by the Conference of INGOs.

6. *Climate change and human rights, contribution to the 21st Climate Conference*

In preparation for the Paris Climate Summit to be held from 30 November to 11 December 2015, **heard statements** by:

- **Serge LEPELTIER**, former French Minister of Environment, President of the Académie de l'Eau and former French ambassador responsible for climate change negotiations
- **Sébastien DUYCK**, Researcher at the University of Lapland (Finland), specialist in Environment Law, Co-leader of the Working group on Climate Change and Human Rights of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

The hearing was preceded by a series of questions in pictures presented by **Karl DONERT**, President of EUROGEO, entitled "**What if...?**" What would happen if a heat wave worsened the melting of glaciers and polar ice caps? If sea levels rose by over 0.6 m in a century? What messages should NGOs convey to people whose territories were under threat? In his view, climate change combined ethical and moral issues with the demands of democracy and social cohesion. What role should NGOs therefore play?

Sébastien DUYCK described the reasons for the inclusion of human rights in the climate change negotiations working group of which he was co-leader, which involved:

- recognition of the impact of climate change on fundamental rights,
- consideration of the impact of political choices on access to housing, water and food (cf last IPCC report), for instance in Honduras, where communities which had lived from food crop farming had been removed to make way for the production of biofuels (palm oil) with the support of subsidies from European countries. Several dozen peasant farmers who had refused to leave their land had been killed by private militias employed to remove them on behalf of the operating companies. Likewise, in Panama, indigenous communities had been removed against their will to allow the building of a hydroelectric dam.

The actions of the experts and NGOs were directed towards the UN Convention on Climate Change (UNCCC) and the Human Rights Council, in Geneva, which was taking an increasing interest in the impact of climate change on fundamental rights on

the basis of special reports and state reports. Further input was provided by the special rapporteurs on access to water and on population displacement.

The Climate Convention addressed these risks through the use of a framework convention. However, any reference to the term “human rights” was taboo for many diplomats and national representatives because of fears of it being exploited inappropriately by certain countries and making the negotiations more complex.

Some entry points did, however, exist if a distinction was made between different types of rights, i.e. substantive rights such as the right to water, food and housing on the one hand and procedural rights such as the right to the necessary information, the right to take part in decision-making and the right to legal remedies on the other.

At the same time, questions remained about how ambitious the 2015 summit should be:

- Scientific questions, in particular about the difference between the consequences of a global warming goal of 1.5% or 2%. What would the difference in impact be?
- Questions about fairness and burden sharing: how should the levels of emissions reductions be shared out? Which country should make the biggest effort? Was it possible to recognise a right to subsistence levels of emissions or CO₂ emission levels that enabled fundamental needs to be met?
- Once the policies had been agreed, what could be done to avoid negative impacts on communities? (Example of Panama, where a dam subsidised by various countries violated international law concerning population displacements, while enabling the country to sell the quotas freed up as a result). In his view, the product of breaches of this kind should not be allowed to enter the European emissions trading market. Failure to address these issues meant that developing countries had additional economic reasons for giving reductions in emissions levels priority over the rights of local communities.

One of the Climate Convention’s particular features would be to focus on procedural rights. It should provide leverage for promoting these rights on three levels:

- At local level, the financial transfers made possible by the Climate Convention were substantial (\$100 billion by 2020). Account would have to be taken of the impact of the projects on local communities.
- At national level, by February 2015, all countries had to present their targets for the Paris agreements for 2025 or 2030. A decade of climate policy would therefore have to be agreed in the next 12 months. To what extent would NGOs and trade unions take part in the decision-making process? Governments would have a very important role to play in the coming months to involve the public in these decisions.
- At civil society level, there was the role of the NGOs, the representatives of indigenous communities and trade unions in the actual climate negotiations. The country hosting the negotiations (Lima at the end of 2014 and Paris at the end of 2015) had a duty to involve civil society players both in the negotiations and in parallel forums.
- The 2015 agreement, for which the world had been waiting for six years, was to regulate the situation post-Kyoto. Many organisations were interested in the impact of climate change and public policies on human rights. The Lima conference due to be held in December would coincide with International Human Rights Day on 10 December. That should be the occasion for a day of thematic discussions involving several countries and ministers in order to come up with more practical solutions.
- References to human rights only existed in the 2010 Cancun Agreements (impact of change, impact of policies and impact of trading in pollution rights). They needed to be included and expanded in the future Paris treaty so that human rights were one of the principles of the climate negotiations. In international environmental law, they were currently fragmented between environmental rights and human rights. It was vital to consider the involvement of all spheres of decision-making in the treaty. (Audio link)

Serge LEPELTIER, France's former climate ambassador, confirmed that human rights had not been taken into account in the negotiations, nor had certain threats to peoples' rights which could be attributed to measures to combat climate change.

While he believed that individual citizens were clearly aware of local ecology, the global ecology resulting from the impact of individuals' actions at global level seemed to be much less well understood, although the climate was one of the two vital factors at global level, the other being biodiversity.

He referred to the IPCC's predictions for the end of the century, namely a rise in temperature of 1.6°C to 5°C and a rise in sea levels of 80 cm to a metre, stressing that the maximum figures given by scientists, who were deliberately cautious, were almost always exceeded. He had little doubt that the temperature would rise by 4°C to 5°C by 2100. In two centuries, the world would witness what had taken 100 000 years before. Moreover, human beings had not existed when Earth was 2°C warmer and sea levels were 25 m higher than at present.

To prevent an increase of over 2°C, total carbon levels would have to be limited to 800 billion tonnes while the figure of 530 billion tonnes had already been reached. Accordingly, the levels of greenhouse gas emissions would have to be divided by three between 2020 and 2050 and the figures would have to be negative by the end of the century. No more than 20% of current oil reserves and 2% to 3% of known coal reserves could be used.

The link between economics and the environment would be decisive when combating climate change. For instance, the Stern report had said that investments of 1% of global GDP would have to be made – otherwise, the use of some forms of energy would have to be restricted through pricing. The consequences then would be 5% to 20% of the value of GDP.

The negotiations were governed by the 2011 Durban agreements, which meant, in particular, there would have to be a global agreement in 2015 that was applicable by 2020, a green fund estimated at 100 billion dollars a year, technology transfers and compensation for damage and losses.

Several questions therefore arose:

Could a legally enforceable instrument apply to all countries when the relevant responsibilities were deemed to be shared but different? Could voluntary undertakings by countries be effective? Would whole countries have to commit themselves or would they put forward partial examples? What would non-binding commitments produce? Were the commitments of local authorities up to the challenges? Was it possible to do without indicators and, if not, how could they be chosen to produce reliable results? (Example of per capita greenhouse gas emission levels rather than national emission levels: India had high greenhouse gas emission levels in volume terms, but its per capita emission levels were 20 times lower than in the United States). What account would be taken of the carbon footprint of imports?

In his view, the decisive factors included the role of China and the United States, the position of the three components of the Group of 77 and the content of the agreement.

Adopted the text of the committee's position presented by Edith WENGER, head of the Climate and Human Rights Working Group (cf. appendix).

Edith WENGER, in turn, stressed the fundamental rights affected by climate change, for instance

- the right to life,
- the right to dignity and decent living conditions,
- the right to security, health, food and water,
- the right to the protection of property,

- the right to nationality and freedom of movement.

In her view, it was vital to take preventive measures to reduce climate change factors and adapt as effectively as possible, while taking account of human rights when drawing up reduction and adaptation strategies. At the same time, nothing could be achieved without the active, transparent, responsible and informed participation of all citizens, as it was a matter of building a joint vision for the future.

The text had been drawn up as a **tool** for everybody as an information source on the subject, and she urged committee members to use the document and the recommendations it set out in the many meetings on climate change which would be held before the new Paris treaty was adopted.

=> The committee agreed to submit the text adopted to the Conference of INGOs for approval. It would be circulated among the relevant UN bodies and the NGOs involved in the preparation of the Paris Conference of the Parties in December 2015. Before then, a partnership would again be proposed to the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local Authorities with a view to a joint declaration.

7. Participatory democracy: co-operation by the committee in the Landscape Award jury and the CEMAT

7.1. LIBERA Names and figures against the Mafia

Given the absence of the representative of the NGO, Libera, caused by the Air France strikes, **heard** a statement by Gerhard ERMISCHER (CIVILSCAPE), head of the Landscape Working Group, on the example of the revival of the region of Alto Belice Corleonese through the recovery of land confiscated from Mafia organisations. The association's work had been recognised at the Council of Europe Landscape Award ceremony (Wroclaw, Poland, 11-12 June 2014).

Gerhard ERMISCHER said that Italian legislation allowed the state to confiscate land from the Mafia, but the land was often left fallow because of fears of reprisals against anyone who used it. Against this background, the LIBERA association had bravely sought out partners (now totalling almost 1 600 schools and associations) to use the land for the benefit of the poorest members of society.

The NGO had created new opportunities, integrated young unemployed people from the region and people with disabilities and invited young people from all over Europe on placements (5 000 young people a year). The communities had created an innovative environment.

In his view, the work done by the association was the very embodiment of the principles set out in the European Landscape Convention. In focusing on the territorial aspect of democracy, the NGO had sought to empower the residents to take control of their lives and to decide about the future of their land and the development of their landscapes. LIBERA had created a new environment in both natural and social terms. It was an astounding example of action on the ground by NGOs.

See text of NGO presentation / audio presentation by Gerhard Ermischer

7.2. Council of Europe Conference of Ministers Responsible for Spatial/Regional Planning, 16th Session of the CEMAT, "Promoting territorial democracy in spatial planning" (17 June 2014, Nafplion, Greece)

Was informed by Luc-Emile BOUCHE FLORIN, Honorary President of the ECTP, about the proceedings and conclusions of the last session of the CEMAT on citizen participation in the spatial/regional planning process.

The text with input from the committee's member NGOs could have a far-reaching impact throughout Europe.

Romania would hold the chair of the ministerial conference for the next four years.

=> The committee agreed to distribute and support the text adopted by the ministers in

8. *Internal committee activities*

Heard the proposals from four working groups:

European citizenship: Hélène PICHON (CEPS), head of the working group, raised the question of the meaning of European identity, which was a complex issue within the Council of Europe area, where it was supported by the promotion of human rights, including the right to culture, to interculturalism and to multiculturalism. The working group proposed that European alliances and European cultural centres be set up with a view to teaching and sharing the cultures and languages of European countries.

Relations with the EU: Claude-Laurent GENTY (CITI), Honorary President of the Conference of INGOs and head of the ad hoc working group, highlighted the need for contacts between the civil society organisations of the two institutions. This should involve exchanges comparable to those established by the other pillars of the Council of Europe with their counterparts in the EU. The working group had taken stock of possible areas of co-operation and established contacts, in particular with the European Economic and Social Committee and the NGO platforms at the European Commission.

Social cohesion and intercultural dialogue: presentation of the introductory report “The cultural city as a social city, re-establishing social cohesion and giving democracy fresh impetus”

Israel MENSAH (OIEC), Vice-Chair of the committee and head of the working group, said that the introductory report carried on from the report on “Living together” and the guide on “Intercultural Cities”. It was a contribution to the Council of Europe’s discussions about a new third way based on prior intercultural dialogue, which was vital for social cohesion as opposed to assimilation or community isolationism.

Emanuela CAVALERI said that the text recommended action to promote interculturalism in European cities following on from the Council of Europe’s guide “The intercultural city step by step”. The text was based on a more in-depth analysis of European societies, with the problem of managing the multicultural dimension being linked to a crisis in social cohesion. The breakdown in community links as a result of globalisation meant people were losing their personal identity benchmarks and retreating into environments where there was no place for the other. The distance they established between themselves and other groups caused problems in terms of interaction, intolerance, exclusion and attempts at forced assimilation. While the working group believed that there could be no identities without relationships, it was important to avoid basing activities for managing diversity on an ethnic approach that ultimately increased identity barriers. Meetings facilitated by city authorities needed to be promoted, as did efforts to find areas of common interest which transcended ethnic divides. NGOs were ideal bodies for promoting this type of action. Two examples here were the association, *Mémoires d’Afrique*, which raised awareness of interculturalism from early childhood, and SFAIRA, an Italian association which fostered the inclusion of parents of migrant schoolchildren through meetings between Italian and migrant parents, thereby contributing to lifelong learning of living together in harmony.

9. *Ongoing developments in the countries of the Eastern and Southern Mediterranean*

Held an exchange of views following the analysis given by **Jean-Pierre ESTIVAL** (AEC), head of the ad hoc working group, on the situation in the countries of the Maghreb and the Middle East and the possibilities for action by the NGOs in those countries.

Jean-Pierre ESTIVAL said that the situation was serious and warned about a “jihadist arc” extending from Nigeria to Afghanistan. Libya was no longer a state, Egypt was on its knees, Syria was a bloodbath and Iraq was at war and on the verge of breaking up, as was Yemen. Lebanon was paralysed. In his view, Europe needed a long-term vision because its future depended to a large extent on what happened in those countries.

60 000 NGOs had operated there, but it was almost impossible to operate in Libya, Egypt or Saudi Arabia. There had been 200 abductions, half of which involving NGO representatives in Yemen. Morocco, Lebanon and Algeria welcomed NGOs.

The UN had asked Europe to take in 30 000 refugees, but, unfortunately, it had only agreed to take in 13 000, which only aggravated the problem of illegal arrivals in Lampedusa, Morocco and Greece.

Lilia BENSEDRINE and several other speakers underlined the need to remain optimistic and give the democratic transition processes time. In the view of Jean-Pierre HICHERI (CITI), the call to NGOs and civil society was not enough. The EU, the Council of Europe and their member states had to be made aware of their responsibilities so that action was taken on both sides of the Mediterranean and people of goodwill, especially in the business sector, developed joint projects.

Anje WIERSINGA, head of the Working Group on Gender Perspectives in Political and Democratic Processes, in Particular during and after Conflicts, stressed the need not to be judgmental about these countries, but to support the work of local NGOs, in particular concerning women. She also referred to the Council of Europe's three-year priorities for the neighbourhood countries, in particular Tunisia, Morocco and Jordan, which were still not well known although the implementation period would soon be ending (2015). A new programme was under preparation. It was important for the Conference of INGOs to contribute to the new programme.

=> The committee agreed to integrate its work in the Council of Europe neighbourhood policy currently being drawn up.

10. NORTH-SOUTH

Was informed about the participation of **Anne-Marie CHAVANON**, Chair, in the closing session of the national dialogue on the new constitutional roles of civil society in Morocco (cf speech in French).

For her part, **Anje WIERSINGA** would send committee members a report about her participation in a conference also held in Rabat on the subject of training and empowerment of women.

11. End-of-mandate message

Received very sincere thanks from the Chair on her own behalf and on behalf of the outgoing vice-chairs, **Israel MENSAH** and **Vera JOHN MIKOLAJEWSKI**. She expressed her profound gratitude to all the committee members and the working group heads for their commitment and their stimulating support throughout her term.

AMC