

## Speech by Gudrun Mosler-Törnström, President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

### **Ceremony 25th Anniversary of the Association of Ukrainian Cities (AUC)**

**Kyiv, Ukraine, 30 June 2017**

Dear President Poroshenko,  
Dear Mr Klitschko,  
Dear Colleagues,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to start my intervention by thanking you, Mr Klitschko, for your warm welcome here in Kyiv. I am pleased to take part in this ceremony dedicated to the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Association of Ukrainian Cities. It represents an important landmark for local and regional governance in Ukraine, and illustrates the importance of national associations as a driving force for good governance, decentralisation processes and democracy.

We, in the Congress, are proud to say that we are long-standing partners of Ukraine and support the country in its efforts to strengthen local and regional democracy. In this, we have implemented a large number of activities on the ground to strengthen the role of local and regional elected representatives. I would like more particularly to thank you, President Poroshenko, for the support you have expressed to the Congress' work in your letter to our Monitoring Committee, which met this week in Kharkiv to discuss in depth the situation of local and regional democracy in our member States.

Let me tell you that we, in the Congress, welcome the reforms and initiatives that your government, President Poroshenko, together with the Ukrainian parliament have been implementing, with strong support from the Ukrainian national associations. These have introduced new responsibilities and opportunities for local authorities to better answer the needs and demands from citizens.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

National associations of local and regional authorities such as the Association of Ukrainian Cities play a key role within their countries. In the Congress, we view them as performing multiple functions as intermediaries and lobbyists, and in safeguarding the European Charter of Local Self-Government. The Charter offers a set of principles on how to organise a democratic and decentralised state, in order to foster local self-government. It provides for the "right of local authorities to associate" and for their respective association to protect and promote their common interests. National associations serve as a platform to bring together elected representatives and ensure co-operation, in order to bolster local governance and democracy. Being alert to the needs of their members and to the challenges they face, associations serve as a "forum" for local and regional authorities.

Associations are indeed an indispensable stakeholder in the local government system. We need their co-operation and feedback for the implementation of the Congress recommendations. While it is the Congress which monitors the implementation of the principles enshrined in the Charter, national associations share the responsibility for their application.

Moreover, we need them to be the voice of local communities and an advocate for their concerns. We need them to facilitate consultation and to maintain the dialogue between the national authorities and the local authorities. We need them to work on sharing and disseminating good practices, through

projects and activities in the field, with the Congress and with other international stakeholders and relevant organisations.

We consider national associations to be the natural partners of the Congress, and we have stressed this in our Congress Priorities for 2017-2020. The Congress is willing to co-operate closely with national associations in line with the needs of their member States, and associations are responding to this call.

The ties we have been building with the Association of Ukrainian Cities will mutually consolidate each other's work and achievements, with the shared objective of strengthening local democracy in Ukraine. The roundtable organised in Kyiv on 9 June, gathering together – for the first time in Ukraine – members of the Board of the Association and of the Delegation of Ukraine to the Congress, is a concrete example of this co-operation. All those present stressed the need for regular dialogue in order to address the interests of Ukrainian municipalities in the Congress, and to promote our work at a larger scale.

Yesterday's signature of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Association of Ukrainian Cities and the respective national associations in Georgia and Moldova is another illustration of how we can advance together in the region, co-operate, exchange good practices, and advocate for stronger local and regional authorities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Allow me to stress once again that the Congress, the associations of local and regional authorities, and their respective national governments, need to work in synergy in order to broaden and enhance the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, boost citizen participation and foster multi-level governance.

Engaging all stakeholders in real dialogue will empower local and regional authorities to effectively contribute to the design of policies which concern their communities. In parallel, engaging citizens as active players in their community is another key element of good governance, which can only result in increased citizens' trust in the public authorities.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Democracy begins at the local level, where citizens can make their voices heard in decision-making processes and where elected representatives actively participate in different tiers of government.

For the Congress, democracy will only flourish with the active involvement of local and regional authorities and their national associations.

The Association of Ukrainian Cities is our respected partner. It has proved to be an influential organisation with a strong capacity to defend local government interests at national and European levels. The increased dialogue between your association and the Congress is promising, and can only result in strengthened Ukrainian local authorities and more effective decentralisation.

The Congress is pleased to take part in this important event, gathering today such a number of mayors from all parts of the country - representatives of both large and small local authorities, some in charge of newly formed municipalities and others responsible for territories in the process of amalgamation.

On the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, I would like - on behalf of the Congress - to warmly congratulate the Association of Ukrainian Cities and its members, and to wish you every success.

Rest assured that the Congress is on your side in the strengthening and promotion of local good governance and democracy.

Thank you for your attention.