



51st SESSION

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Towards a healthy environment from the local level up

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Draft recommendation (for vote).....2

1. L: Chamber of Local Authorities / R: Chamber of Regions.
EPP/CCE: European People's Party Group in the Congress.
SOC/G/PD: Group of Socialists, Greens and Progressive Democrats.
ILDG: Independent Liberal and Democratic Group.
ECR: European Conservatives and Reformists Group.
PfE: Patriots for Europe.
NR: Members not belonging to a political group of the Congress.

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION

1. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe ("the Congress") refers to:
 - a. the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (ETS No. 5) and the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights regarding the environment;
 - b. the European Social Charter (revised) (ETS No. 163);
 - c. the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122) and its Additional Protocol on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207);
 - d. the Reykjavík Declaration - United around our values, adopted at the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government in May 2023, and its Appendix V "The Council of Europe and the environment";
 - e. Recommendation CM/Rec(2022)20 of the Committee of Ministers to member States on human rights and the protection of the environment, adopted on 27 September 2022;
 - f. the Council of Europe Strategy on the Environment (2025-2030) and its Action Plan;
 - g. Congress Resolution ... (2026) "Congress priorities 2026-2031";
 - h. Congress Recommendation 536 (2025) "An additional protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the environment".
2. The Congress notes with deep concern that:
 - a. climate-related data show that the triple planetary crisis posed by pollution, climate change and the loss of biodiversity is intensifying. August 2026 was the warmest month ever recorded, 1 in 8 animal and plant species is now threatened with extinction, and sea-level rise is accelerating and could increase by a full meter by 2150;
 - b. in Europe alone, at least 50,000 excess deaths were recorded during the summer 2026 heatwaves, sea and sea-surface record temperatures were broken and drought-related wildfires devastated communities throughout the continent, including in areas not previously affected by such fires;
 - c. in the absence of new environmental action, further damage to people's homes, communities and livelihoods and increased losses of life will continue to erode public authorities' capacity to uphold human rights standards, and thereby also erode public confidence in those standards and the ability of democratic institutions at all levels to uphold them and to protect their way of life.
3. Against this backdrop, the urgency of the moment requires political actors and institutions, at every level, to do all that they can to reverse the trajectory of environmental harm: this is a moral and practical challenge for multilevel governance.
4. As the level of governance closest to the citizens, sub-national authorities have a central role to play in this and must use their powers, to the fullest extent possible, to protect their local environment.
5. In light of the above, the Congress calls on the Committee of Ministers to:
 - a. draw up a draft legally binding instrument in consultation with the Congress, recognising, at Council of Europe level, the autonomous right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment;
 - b. move forward with the Congress proposal set out in Recommendation 536 (2025), to draft an additional protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the environment that would commit member States to raising local and regional authorities' awareness of their powers and responsibilities to protect the environment, so that all levels of government play their part in meeting agreed international standards.