

11th European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) (Limassol, Cyprus: 16-17 October 1997) on "Sustainable regional/spatial planning in Europe and the protection of water resources"

Resolution No. 1 on Sustainable development in Europe

The ministers attending the 11th session of CEMAT, held in Limassol on 16 and 17 October 1997;

having taken note of the report submitted by the Cypriot minister, the background report prepared by the Committee of Senior Officials on "Sustainable spatial development in Europe" and the presentation by the Minister of Regional Planning of Luxembourg on the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP);

recalling that the aim of the Council of Europe is to achieve greater cohesion between its member states in order to safeguard and promote the realisation of the ideals and principles which form their common European heritage and to promote also economic growth and social progress;

having in mind the important texts adopted by international, national and regional bodies in the field of sustainable development;

1. Consider that:

in order to reinforce the European idea and achieve cohesion among European states and among regions within each of these states, it is essential to introduce at the European level a comprehensive, co-ordinated, sustainable development perspective, taking account of the exhaustibility of natural resources and incorporating environmental, economic, social, cultural and public health considerations;

any comprehensive regional/spatial planning approach in pursuance of sustainable development of European territory needs to relate and be relevant to the whole of Europe, as much as possible; the sustainable development of Europe must stem from and in fact facilitate an on-going process of co-operation between countries in partnership, which should result in a harmonious and balanced framework of territorial strategies; transfrontier and inter-regional co-operation is an important way of co-ordinating and harmonising regional/spatial planning policies in Europe;

the globalisation of production and financial markets and ever-accelerating technological progress impose the need to improve Europe's competitiveness in all fields in comparison to other regions of the world as a precondition for reducing unemployment and improving the living standards of less economically advantaged European citizens; it is essential to set up mechanisms and pursue policies which would contribute to narrow any socio-economic gap existing between countries of the Council of Europe;

short-term economic profitability cannot continue to be considered as the only, or the decisive, consideration in important decisions affecting the future of most Europeans; profitability and competitiveness must be pursued within the overall context of sustainability and the preservation of diversities;

despite the remaining disparities between European states and regions in respect of economic and social structures, infrastructure networks, employment prospects and the framework for protection of the environment, sustainable development of the European territory as a whole can only be based on democracy and attained in co-operation between all member states;

all Europeans should be adequately informed on the major objectives pursued by their governments and have an idea of the vision of Europe for the next century; clear and credible commitments will reinforce mutual respect, tolerance and understanding. Residents, including young European generations, should be offered a realistic opportunity to be meaningfully involved in the making of decisions which are bound to affect their amenities and choices in the future;

2. Stress that:

there is a need to establish a European regional/spatial planning perspective, which will enable the balanced and sustainable development of all the Council of Europe's member states, and to promote European co-operation at national, regional and local levels; the aim must be to reach consensus on areas of joint action in the field of spatial planning policy and to put forward realistic recommendations for action, in the realm of regional and national spatial planning perspectives, and for international co-operation;

any regional and spatial perspective must be conceived as an integrated and comprehensive political approach to the fundamental question of promoting sustainable development; such strategies should encourage a better balance between conurbations and rural areas, enable enhanced co-ordination between sectoral, environmental and regional policies at European level and encourage the prudent use of natural resources;

any proposal to implement an integrated European regional development perspective should be sufficiently flexible to adapt to the continual rapid changes in our society; the lifestyles and patterns of work and recreation in the society of tomorrow will undoubtedly be different from those of today's society; it is essential not to underestimate the risk of exclusion for a growing proportion of the population who have difficulties in adapting to this development;

in order to support sustainable development throughout Europe it is very important to take into account the current situation and forecast future changes in the rest of the world;

the competitiveness of Europe in all fields in comparison to the rest of the world must be preserved and enhanced, since it has become a fundamental precondition for suppressing unemployment and improving the living standards of less economically advantaged European citizens;

the formulation of any sustainable development perspective for Europe should be compatible with national sustainable development policies and with the implementation of sectoral policies at national and European level, since the latter has considerable and far-reaching repercussions on regional planning;

sustainable development cannot be attained without the willingness of contemporary Europeans to accept responsibility for the real cost of their present amenities; natural resources are not without limits and they are to be used with restraint, in order to ensure that living conditions will not be downgraded in the future;

3. Acknowledge the need to:

intensify efforts to identify the major objectives and priorities of a European comprehensive regional/spatial planning perspective, which should be based on the principle of sustainable development;

define these objectives and devise appropriate strategies for achieving them, having due regard to the distribution of competencies at national and European levels;

take more account in its activities of the consequences of the subsidiarity principle in regional/spatial planning policies and of the place of local authorities and regions in national and European decision-making processes;

take into account the documents drawn up in this field by the Council of Europe's bodies, such as the European Regional/Spatial Planning Charter adopted by the

Council of Europe in 1983 and the European Regional Planning Strategy adopted during the eighth session of the CEMAT in Lausanne;

concentrate on providing a balance in the development of urban and rural areas, recognising, inter alia, the role of European urban systems and communication axes as engines of balanced regional development in Europe;

agree on joint areas of action like transfrontier co-ordination for all regional impact assessments, at a very early stage of the planning process for any project with significant impact on cross-border territory and environment;

enhance co-operation between groups of states and promote the search for strategies relevant to different geographical areas of Europe, so as to facilitate the preparation of guiding principles for sustainable and comprehensive spatial development in Europe in the next century which should be relevant to the whole of Europe;

strengthen co-operation between the Council of Europe and the European Union within the framework of the CEMAT so as to co-ordinate their respective groundwork in drafting important guiding principles for European territory;

plan for the development of Europe, having regard to the situation and the conditions prevailing beyond the borders of the European territory;

develop and improve the decision-making process at various European institutional levels and enhance the effectiveness of the European public sector;

involve representatives of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities in implementing CEMAT's work programme, and particularly in the drafting of major guiding principles, and ensure that there is effective co-operation and co-ordination between the three bodies;

strengthen the co-ordination between different sectoral policies as a measure for increasing consistency and complementarity;

to ensure that all major decisions of bodies of the Council of Europe which have significant implications for spatial planning at the European level should, before their adoption, be discussed by the CEMAT;

constrain current trends towards the over-exploitation of resources in order to avoid building tensions between states which have marked differences in consumption power and standards of living;

to safeguard the cultural heritage, which as a unique treasure of Europe must be transmitted to future generations; not only should it be preserved, it should also be promoted as a fundamental and complementary element of any sustainable development system, which should incorporate this important aspect of the quality of life;

4. Recommend that the governments of member states:

initiate and sponsor information and awareness-building campaigns in order to explain to the citizens of Europe the implications of sustainable development and the need to modify their way of thinking and lifestyles;

5. Approve:

the 1997-2000 work programme as outlined in document CEMAT (97) 5, which includes the following activities:

- drafting the guiding principles for sustainable and comprehensive spatial development in Europe in the next century;
- European cities and metropolis networks;
- prospects for rural areas in Europe;
- European transport infrastructure networks;
- sustainable use of energy sources;
- different forms of funding spatial planning policies;

and expecting that its implementation will contribute to the preparation of the next conference.

6. Instruct the Committee of Senior Officials:

to prepare a document appropriate to the European level on the objectives and guiding principles that should facilitate and guarantee sustainable and comprehensive development of Europe in the next century; this comprehensive regional/spatial planning perspective should be used as a reference for the framing of national policies in regard to spatial planning and enhance the potential for improved co-ordination of sectoral policies throughout Europe;

to organise, within the approved work programme of the CEMAT, European meetings likely to:

- a. encourage awareness on issues relating to sustainable development and its repercussions on lifestyles, at present and in the future;
- b. improve co-ordination between sectoral policies, to ensure that sectoral development respects the principles of sustainable development;
- c. provide a response to the challenge of formulating an innovative development model for Europe of the 21st century; this model should be acceptable to Europeans and represent a realistic and efficient balance in terms of sustainability, competitiveness, progress and economic growth, employment patterns and a European level of quality of life;

to pursue comprehensive, long-range studies to identify the trends that are expected to define the needs and behaviour of European society in the 21st century, in order to be able to adapt, with no excessively adverse ecological and social consequences, to the major changes that will be necessary and desirable in our society in order to anticipate crises of any type.