

The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities



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Launch of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) and the role of the Congress

Bureau of the Congress

Rapporteurs: Ian MICALLEF, Malta (L, EPP/CD¹) and Ludmila SFIRLOAGA, Romania (R, SOC¹)

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Summary

The Mediterranean region is a major strategic area for Europe but continues to be an area of conflict, tension and political instability.

Political dialogue and co-operation between Europe and the countries of the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean are therefore essential to promote political stability and give new impetus to the social and economic development of the Mediterranean Basin.

In this context, the local and regional authorities have an important role to play as good governance requires the full participation of the local stakeholders, local and regional authorities and civil society.

The Congress already has special relations with the countries on the Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean Basin – in particular with local authorities associations – and seeks to promote local and regional democracy, the key factor in genuine interterritorial co-operation.

The Congress therefore welcomes the initiative taken by the EU Committee of the Regions in the context of the Union for the Mediterranean in setting up the ARLEM, a political assembly in which the local and regional authorities of Europe and those from the Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean are represented.

The Congress welcomes its status as observer in this assembly and looks forward to contributing to the stabilisation and development of the Mediterranean Basin. It also firmly believes that the joint commitment of the Congress and the Committee of the Regions to this theme will provide a further opportunity to foster the already fruitful co-operation between the two Organisations, as advocated in the agreement drawn up between them.

¹ L : Chamber of Local Authorities / R : Chamber of Regions
ILDG : Independent and Liberal Democrat Group of the Congress
EPP/CD : Group European People's Party – Christian Democrats of the Congress
SOC : Socialist Group of the Congress
NR : Member not belonging to a Political Group of the Congress



A. DRAFT RESOLUTION²

1. Political dialogue and active multidisciplinary co-operation between Europe and the countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean are vital preconditions for the political stability and socio-economic development of the Mediterranean Basin.
2. At all its institutional levels, the Council of Europe has always been open to contacts and relations with the south-eastern region of the Mediterranean Basin.
3. For its part, the Congress, being convinced that co-operation at local and regional authority level is vital in order to guarantee governance based on the fundamental values of democracy, human rights and the rule of law, has been particularly attentive to the links with the countries of this region and to activities concerning local democracy.
4. The quality of the Congress's dialogue with specific countries on the southern and eastern shore of the Mediterranean Basin can only encourage it to continue and intensify its efforts.
5. Furthermore, the relaunch of the Barcelona Process under the French initiative of the Union for the Mediterranean is a major opportunity which Europe must seize.
6. Consequently, the Congress fully agrees with the Committee of the Regions' view that it is vital – in view of the institutional advances made by the local and regional authorities on the European stage – for the local and regional level to be duly taken into account in the European governance of the Union for the Mediterranean.
7. It is in this same spirit that the Congress is convinced of the importance and role of the EMPA (the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly), which can support, at the parliamentary level, the legislative processes required for institutional advances, notably at the local and regional level.
8. It therefore welcomes the Committee of the Regions' initiative to set up the ARLEM as a political assembly in which local and regional representatives of Europe and the southern and eastern shore of the Mediterranean can meet to discuss practical co-operation projects.
9. Like the ARLEM, the Congress is convinced that this dialogue must also serve the advance of local democracy and decentralisation in the countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean.
10. The Congress welcomes its observer status with the ARLEM, and is convinced that, like the other ARLEM partner bodies and associations, it is important for it to be able to contribute to the process.

² Preliminary draft resolution approved by the Congress Bureau on 5 February 2010

Bureau members:

Y. Mildon, President of the Congress, *J. Micallef, President a.i of the Congress and President of the Chamber of Local Authorities, L. Šfirloaga, President of the Chamber of Regions, D. Suica, G. Krug, A. Knape, S. Rihniemi, H. Zach, I. Borbely, J.-C. Frécon, S. Orlova, F. Pellegrini, K. Andersen, E. Yeritsyan, I. Michas, O. Van Veldhuizen, and N. Romanova*

N.B : The names of members who took part in the vote are in italics

Bureau Secretariat : D. Rios, Linette Taesch

11. *In the light of the above, the Congress*

a. decides to:

- i. fully support the ARLEM and the relaunch of the Barcelona Process by the Union for the Mediterranean;
- ii. co-operate with the Committee of the Regions and the ARLEM, with its know-how and experience in the fields of local democracy and decentralisation;
- iii. ask its Working Group to take account of the Congress' involvement in this venture when defining its future priorities and activities.

b. invites the local and regional authorities of its member countries and their associations to forge bilateral relations with authorities in the countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean Basin.

B. EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM

The Union for the Mediterranean and the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM): the Congress's contribution

1. The geographical, historical, cultural and political links between the countries on both shores of the Mediterranean are ancient and strong; they constitute a major asset for developing harmonious and sustainable relations in the Mediterranean Basin;
2. Unfortunately, however, the Mediterranean region is still an area of major conflict, tension and political instability. The situation in the Middle East can therefore only jeopardise the socio-economic development of the region and accentuate existing democratic deficits.
3. This makes it important to develop good neighbourly relations among the countries of the northern and southern shores of the Mediterranean and to help improve stability by developing co-operation not only in the socio-economic fields but also in the areas of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.
4. The Council of Europe has always concerned itself with the Mediterranean region, realising the importance of the relations to be maintained and developed with the countries of the south-eastern shore of the Basin in order to develop pragmatic dialogue with a view to peace, stability and economic and social development in this region. For a number of decades now, the Organisation has been working intensively in this direction at its different institutional levels.
5. In connection, for instance, with co-operation at local government level, in the early 1990s the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities organised periodical conferences centred on co-operation among the Mediterranean regions, in co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly.
6. Representatives of the local and regional authorities and members of the parliaments of the Council of Europe member States and the south-eastern shore of the Mediterranean Basin thus met in Marseille, Taormina, Limassol/Nicosia, Marmaris, Varna, etc, to debate the ways and means of ensuring productive co-operation in the region.
7. This dialogue was highly profitable, because it alerted the members of parliament present to the need to adapt the competences and resources of local authorities to the needs of a type of co-operation which must be, in part, proposed and decided by the addressees themselves, ie the local or regional authorities.

8. However, the “Standing Conference” at the time, and the Congress now, have well understood the importance – beyond any selective projects in the various socio-economic fields – of supporting countries in the south-eastern Mediterranean in developing, establishing and reinforcing local and regional democracy, which is the keystone of genuine inter-regional co-operation.

9. The Congress accordingly developed relations with Tunisia and Morocco on institutional affairs relating to decentralisation, local self-government and regionalisation. Co-operation with Morocco has been particularly productive, giving rise to such practical projects as the creation and installation of the Association of Moroccan Local and Regional Authorities, which was facilitated by the joint action of the Moroccan authorities, the Congress and *Cités Unies France*.

10. As part of the co-operation with the countries in the Mediterranean Region, the Congress has also established relations with the Israeli and Palestinian Authority Associations of local authorities, both of which hold observer status with the Congress. At the invitation of both the Palestinian Authority and Israel, the Congress has observed local elections in these countries.

11. Where co-operation with the Arab countries is concerned, on 10 and 11 February 2008, the Congress organised the 3rd Euro-Arab Cities Forum, which was held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, in cooperation with COPPEM³, the CEMR⁴ and the Association of Arab Towns.

12. In 2009, in response to an initiative from the Chamber of Local Authorities and realising the importance of helping to relaunch Euro–Mediterranean co-operation, the Congress decided to set up a Working Group on "Euro-Mediterranean Cities and Provinces" in order to "organise" its participation and co-operation in the new process of Euro-Mediterranean co-operation initiated by the French Presidency with the Union for the Mediterranean.

13. The Congress therefore welcomes the initiative by Luc van den Brande – President of the Committee of the Regions – to promote the establishment of a Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM) based on equal representation of members from the southern shore of the Mediterranean and representatives of the Committee of the Regions and associations and organisations working in the field of Euro-Mediterranean co-operation.

14. In the opinion which it adopted at its 76th plenary session (8 and 9 October 2009), the Committee of the Regions clearly affirmed its ambition to set up a dialogue and exchange platform for local and regional authorities from the southern and eastern Mediterranean, and also expressed its legitimate hope that the ARLEM would be acknowledged as a consultative institutional partner within the Union for the Mediterranean, on the same basis as the similar parliamentary assembly for national parliaments, the EMPA.

15. The experience of the various past initiatives, the disappointing results of the Barcelona Process and the role and increasing responsibilities shouldered by the local and regional authorities in the process of European construction clearly show that the Union for the Mediterranean must make room for these authorities.

16. Developing dialogue and co-operation activities at the local and regional levels and within civil society is a vital precondition for the success of an overall strategy.

17. We welcome the fact that the countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean appear to have realised the importance and increasing role of the participation of local and regional authorities and civil society in the governance process. However, we cannot overlook the fact that the implementation of local democracy, the decentralisation process and the participation of civil society are generally weak, and sometimes non-existent.

³ COPPEM = Standing Committee for the Euro Mediterranean Partnership of Local and Regional Authorities

⁴ CEMR = Council of European Municipalities and Regions

18. It is therefore important to join with the southern and eastern Mediterranean countries in developing co-operation on practical projects, but also with an eye to supporting institutional progress in terms of local democracy and decentralisation.

19. The fact is that the dynamism of political dialogue and concrete co-operation among local and regional authorities necessarily involve action to decrease institutional differences among the different partners.

20. It is consequently vitally important to develop co-operation at various levels in order to enhance the quality of the results, in line with improvements in the conditions for dialogue.

21. Accordingly, like the Committee of the Regions, the Congress is convinced that the organisations, associations and other bodies working in this field must be involved in the ARLEM's action, in accordance with their competence and availability.

22. The Congress welcomes the fact that in line with its wishes, the ARLEM Bureau has granted it observer status, and considers that the useful co-operation between the Committee of the Regions and the Congress will be able to develop satisfactorily in this framework.

23. The Congress considers that its experience, know-how and institutional mission within the Council of Europe geared to promoting, defending and helping countries to reinforce local democracy and the participation of civil society will effectively help promote the Euro-Mediterranean co-operation being developed in the ARLEM.

24. Moreover, being aware of the fact that any institutional process geared to intensifying local democracy must involve a prior legislative process, the Congress advocates co-operation between the ARLEM and the EMPA in order to encourage and support all progress made in the local democracy field.

25. For its part, the Congress might intensify its co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe and thus support the corresponding activities.

26. The Congress Working Group responsible for making the efforts to promote co-operation with the countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean more specific and more effective will obviously take account of the ARLEM's priorities in its work. Furthermore, it is hoping that ARLEM and the Committee of the Regions will be fully involved in its activities.

Conclusions

27. The Congress is convinced of the importance of increased co-operation with the countries of the southern and eastern Mediterranean Basin for the socio-economic and geopolitical development of the region.

28. The method of conducting co-operation not only at intergovernmental level but also at the local and regional authority, civil society and parliamentary levels is vital for achieving the requisite institutional progress and implementing practical co-operation projects in such priority fields as migration, employment, training and environment policy.

29. The Congress must be prepared to become fully involved in this co-operation process and make its competence and know-how available, thereby helping to make the Mediterranean Basin a region of dialogue, stability and democracy.

APPENDIX

CONCLUSIONS OF THE INAUGURAL MEETING AND LIST OF MEMBERS

Inaugural meeting of the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM)
Barcelona, 21 January 2010

Conclusions

We, the local and regions' representatives of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, who came together to establish the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly (ARLEM):

1. Underline the longstanding commitment of regions and local authorities from around the Mediterranean, the EU Committee of the Regions and the associations representing regions and local authorities to foster peace, democracy, social and cultural understanding, sustainable growth and prosperity in this region;
2. Take as guiding principles the commitment expressed by the Heads of State and Government at the Paris Summit of July 2008 "to strengthen democracy and political pluralism by the expansion of participation in political life and the embracing of all human rights and fundamental freedoms" and to address "common challenges facing the Euro-Mediterranean region, such as economic and social development". These principles are deeply rooted and find their first expression in local and regions' governance as well as in the cooperation between different governance levels;
3. Propose that the ARLEM would represent the Euro-Mediterranean regions' and local authorities' dimension in order to enhance the sub-national contribution to the reinvigorated Euro-Mediterranean partnership, as formulated at the Paris Summit on 13 July 2008 and in accordance with the Marseilles Declaration of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM);
4. Are convinced that national approaches in dealing with initiatives from either side of the Mediterranean need to be enhanced to achieve sustainable solutions with the participation of regions and local authorities in shaping and implementing relevant policies for citizens and cooperation between regions and towns within the Euro-Mediterranean region;
5. Commit ourselves to promote and enhance cooperation and work in partnership in an inclusive process; agree that common challenges directly affecting citizens and regions or local levels should be addressed through concrete actions by all partners involved;
6. Are ready to put our long-standing experience in dealing with projects on the ground at the service of the Euro-Mediterranean projects directly involving the regions and the local level;
7. Aim, through the creation of ARLEM, to bring citizens closer to the Euro-Mediterranean dialogue and to channel the information on the mutual benefits that the UfM can assure, beyond the existing instruments of cooperation; aim to bring regions and local actors in direct contact with the EU and UfM institutions in order to better tuning requests with proposals for the general interest;
8. Underline that while framing and implementing strategies and projects, the real needs of citizens need to be put first; therefore suggest that human, technical and academic resources from the regions and the local level be mobilised when implementing projects and that public-private partnership be maximised;

9. Stress that it is necessary to mobilise in order to ensure credits and funding by donors and that there is no unique solution that could unlock credits and financial instruments in all countries; but, at the same time and despite the apparent abundance of projects, there is a lack of coordination between the current development initiatives.

Therefore:

I. Call on the co-presidency of the Union for the Mediterranean to invite the ARLEM as observer to the UfM meetings;

II. Announce that in 2010 the ARLEM will particularly deal with urban and territorial⁵ sustainable development, the decentralisation process, information society, small and medium enterprises, local water management, cultural cooperation as well as migration and integration; in this context its members and their regions' or local administrations will foster twinning and decentralised cooperation for projects dealing with these topics;

III. Call on the Spanish presidency of the EU to enlarge its ministerial meeting on territorial development in March 2010 to the UfM representatives for regional and urban development and to the ARLEM co-presidents;

IV. Ask the ARLEM co-presidents to forward these conclusions to the co-presidency of the Union for the Mediterranean, the Heads of State and Government meeting at the bi-annual summit in June 2010 in Barcelona, and the European Union institutions.

Nominate:

The co-presidents and the members of the Bureau as listed in annex I.

Take note:

That the members of the Assembly are as listed in annex II and that two committees of no less than 32 and no more than 43 members will be established in the near future and will deal with selected topics as referred to in point II here above.

⁵ For the purpose of these conclusions, territorial development is economic and social development of a specific territory. The purpose of territorial development is to achieve the regions' and municipalities' potentialities in order to reach a harmonious and sustainable development of each territory.

Annex I

Co-Presidents:

President in office of the Committee of the Regions, Mr Luc Van den Brande (Flanders/BE)

President of the region Taza-Al Hoceima-Taounate, Mr Mohamed Boudra (MA)

Members of the Bureau:

Governor of Algiers, Mr Mohamed Kebir Addou (DZ)

Mayor of Greater Tafilah, Mr Khalid Al-Hnaifat (JO)

First Vice-president in office of the Committee of the Regions, Mr Michel Delebarre (Dunkerque/FR)

President of the region of Istria, Mr Ivan Jakovcic (HR)

President in office of the external relations commission of the Committee of the Regions, Mr Istvan Sertő-Radics (Uzka/HU)

President of the region Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur, Mr Michel Vauzelle (FR)

Annex II

EU GROUP

TITLE	SURNAME	NAME	CITY, REGION / COUNTRY CODE
Mr	ANDERSEN	Knud	Bornholm / DK
Mr	ANTICH I OLIVER	Francesc	Illes Balears / ES
Ms	ARMENGOL	Francina	Mallorca / ES
Mr	BLANC	Jacques	Languedoc-Roussillon / FR
Ms	BRESSO	Mercedes	Piemonte / IT
Mr	CIMINO	Michele	Sicilia / IT
Mr	COHEN	Michael	Kalkara / MT
Ms	COPPOLA	Maria Luisa	Veneto / IT
Mr	DELEBARRE	Michel	Dunkerque / FR
Mr	ERVELÄ	Risto	Sauvo / FI
Mr	GEMESI	György	Gödöllő / HU
Mr	GOTTARDO	Isidoro	Sacile / IT
Mr	GRINÁN MARTÍNEZ	José Antonio	Andalucía / ES
Ms	HAKANSSON HARJU	Lotta	Järfälla / SE
Mr	HARLINGHAUSEN	Rolf	Hamburg / DE
Mr	HEREU I BOHER	Jordi	Barcelona / ES
Mr	JOSEPH	Jean-Louis	Bastidonne / FR
Mr	KROPIWNICKI	Jerzy	Łódź / PL
Mr	LAHART	John	South Dublin / IE
Mr	LEBRUN	Michel	Wallonie / BE
Ms	LOUCAIDES	Eleni	Nicosia / CY
Mr	MARTINI	Claudio	Toscana / IT
Mr	MICALLEF	Ian	Gżira / MT
Mr	MILIA	Graziano	Ernesto Cagliari / IT
Mr	MONTILLA AGUILERA	José	Catalunya / ES
Mr	PAPASTERGIOU	Georgios	Pieria / GR
Mr	QUAYLE	Dave	Trafford / UK
Mr	ROATTA	Jean	Marseille / FR
Mr	ROUILLON	Christophe	Coulaines / FR
Ms	SABBAN	Michèle	Ile-de-France / FR
Ms	SCHOINARAKI-ILIAKI	Evangelia	Heraklion / GR
Mr	SCHUSTER	Wolfgang	Stuttgart / DE
Mr	SÉRTŐ RADICS	István	Uzka / HU
Mr	SPACCA	Gian Mario	Marche / IT
Mr	SZWABSKI	Stanislaw	Gdynia / PL
Mr	VALCÁRCEL SISO	Ramón Luis	Murcia / ES
Mr	VAN DEN BRANDE	Luc	Vlaanderen / BE, President of the CoR
Mr	VAUZELLE	Michel	Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur / FR
Mr	VENDOLA	Nichi	Puglia / IT
Ms	VIDMAR	Jasmina	Maribor / SI

MEDITERRANEAN PARTNERS GROUP

TITLE	SURNAME	NAME	CITY, REGION / COUNTRY CODE
Mr	ABDEL LATIF	Lobna	Cairo / EG
Mr	ADDOU	Mohamed Kebir	Alger / DZ
Mr	AL-BASHIR	Amer	Greater Amman / JO
Mr	AL-HNAIFAT	Khalid	Greater Tafilah / JO
Mr	ALI	Erfan	Municipal Administration Modernization Program / SY
Mr	BENNOUR	Karim	Hydra / DZ
Mr	BOUCHBOUT	Shlomo	Ma'alot-Tarshiha / IL
Mr	BOUDRA	Mohamed	Taza-Al Hoceima-Taounate / MA
Mr	BOUSSOUF	Rabah	Wilaya de Constantine / DZ
Mr	CHABAT	Abdelhamid	Fez / MA
Mr	DJURAGIĆ	Mario	Republika Srpska / BA
Mr	ELABI	Adel	Damascus / SY
Mr	EL DAKAK	Said	Qalyubiya / EG
Mr	EL JAMALI	Rachid	Fayha'a / LB
Ms	EL KHIEL	Fatna	Arbaoua / MA
Mr	GOLUBOVIĆ	Vuka	Berane / ME
Mr	GÜRÜN	Osman	Muğla / TR
Mr	GÜZELBEY	Asim	Gaziantep / TR
Mr	HAMZA	Ahmed	Nouakchott / MR
Mr	HUSSEIN	Adly	Qalyubiya / EG
Mr	JAKOVČIĆ	Ivan	Istria / HR
Mr	KATICIN	Danijel	Tkon / HR
Ms	KELLINY	Georgette	Cairo / EG
Mr	KERTUSHA	Seid	Durres / AL
Mr	LABIB	Adel	Alexandria / EG
Mr	LUCA	Lorenc	Shkoder / AL
Mr	MANSOUR	Ahmad	Aleppo / SY
Mr	MLIKA	Mohamed	Mehdi Sousse / TN
Mr	MOHAMMED MARICHE	Hocine	Tizi Rached / DZ
Mr	MOUSSA DEMBA	Sow	Kaédi / MR
Mr	NAUFAL	Nouhad	Kesserouen / LB
Mr	OK	İsmail	Balikesir / TR
Mr	OUALALOU	Fathallah	Rabat / MA
Mr	RAIMBERT	Christian	Monaco / MC
Mr	SELMANOVIĆ	Erdal	Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina / BA
Mr	TOPBAŞ	Kadir	Istanbul / TR
Mr	YAHAV	Yona	Haifa / IL