

# The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities



17<sup>th</sup> PLENARY SESSION  
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## The global challenge of climate change: Local responses

Committee on Sustainable Development  
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### Summary

Climate change is a phenomenon that constitutes one of the most serious economic, social and environmental challenges of this century.

The meeting of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Copenhagen in December 2009 is taking on capital importance because it will negotiate a new international agreement on the climate which should take over from the Kyoto Protocol after 2012.

Local and regional authorities, aware of these challenges, have taken numerous initiatives to stabilise the climate and to adapt their areas to the new climatic conditions.

The Congress wants for their role to be fully recognised and for the full support of states for their actions, support which is necessary if the national objectives for the reduction in greenhouse gases are to be achieved. The Congress believes that an effective representation of local and regional authorities in national delegations will add more weight to the negotiations and thus result in an ambitious agreement equal to the climatic stakes.

Moreover, when the fate of the whole of humanity is at stake, the Congress invites the Parties to integrate the human rights dimension into their negotiations in order to provide a more sustainable response to this major challenge.

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



**A. DRAFT RESOLUTION<sup>2</sup>**

1. Intensification of climate change is now unavoidable. Local and regional authorities, very much aware of global challenges and of their impact on the areas they administer and on citizens' lives, have taken innovative and exemplary initiatives to combat climate change and ensure that their territories adapt to its consequences.

2. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe welcomes these initiatives and, in this respect, refers to its recent work on climate change and energy<sup>3</sup>, in which it expresses the view that local and regional authorities have a key role to play in ensuring that climate change does not undergo even more serious and less controllable developments.

3. It is through proactive public policy with regard to mobility and transport, town planning and spatial development, energy and housing that they can meet the dual challenge: firstly, to make a significant contribution to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and, secondly, to adapt to new climatic conditions and to reduce territorial vulnerability.

4. Convinced that climate change necessitates resolute policies and a strong commitment by all local and regional authorities and infra-national tiers of governance, the Congress calls for integrated strategies in the fields of energy and climate change and on integrated mitigation and adaptation measures which do not counteract each other.

5. It also believes in leading by example and considers that the local and regional levels are the most appropriate for raising public awareness and motivating people to make significant changes in their behaviour and lifestyles.

6. The Congress welcomes the growing momentum of territorial climate policies, the commitment of European local and regional authorities to the global effort to achieve a significant reduction in emissions as well as their exemplary action, through initiatives such as the Covenant of Mayors for energy efficiency. It is nonetheless concerned about the future of these policies in this period of financial and economic crisis.

7. The current crisis must not overshadow the principal challenge of the 21st century - climate stability - or, even less, the huge cost of inaction. This crisis offers an opportunity for more ecological regeneration measures. Although the downturn in activity and the recession result in decreased energy consumption, they also act as a brake on investments which are essential to meeting the challenges of climate change and the need for a more environmentally friendly approach to the ways in which goods are produced and consumed.

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<sup>2</sup> Preliminary draft resolution and preliminary draft recommendation approved by the Committee on 2 March 2009

Members of the Committee :

*G. Doganoglu (Chair), V. Kadokhov (Vice Chair), F. Cecchini (Vice Chair), I. Linge (Vice Chair), A. Mediratta (Vice Chair), C. Abela Baldacchino, A. Apostolov, W. Borsus, MA. Caronia (alternate: CP. Muratore), Z. Cholewinski (alternate: A. Banaszak), L. Beauvais, I. De La Serna Hernaiz, L. Dellai (alternate: MC. Spinosa), N. Dudov, I. Franzen, M. Fögl, V. Gorodetskiy (alternate: K. Skomorokhin), E. Gurvits, H. Himmelsbach, P. Hugon, L. Iliescu, S. James, P. Jansen, S. Kalev, I. Khalilov (alternate: S. Mansurova), D. Larese Filon, M. Kichkovskyy, A. King, V. Klitschko (alternate: O. Luk'lanchenko), A. Kurti, J. Mattei-Fazi, I. Milatic, L. Milicevic, K. Mutlu, S. Neeson, C. Nicolescu, G. Neff, JJ. Nygaard, R. Onderka, D. Petrosyan, V. Petrovic, J. Petusik (alternate: J. Hlinka), CA. Pinto, G. Roger, P. Rondelli, U. Rozenbergs, S. Savva, B. Soguel (alternate: P. Receveur), J. Stadelmann, A. Stoilov (alternate: D. Ruseva), S. Svavarsdottir, E. Szucs, M. TAMILOS, B. Toce, V. Tskhadaia, M.S. Uygur, L. Vennesland, E. Villaroja Saldana, M. Yurevich (alternate: M. V. Novikov).*

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

Secretariat of the Committee : M. Moras and J. Hunting

<sup>3</sup> Resolution 236 (2007) Climate change: approaches at local and regional level  
 Resolution 248 (2008) Climate change: building adaptive capacity of local and regional authorities  
 Resolution 262 (2008) Public local and regional action: for a new energy culture

8. The Congress consequently calls on local and regional elected representatives to envisage forthwith climate protection and adaptation measures which would foster the emergence of a low-carbon economy and thereby reduce dependence on fossil fuels, create new jobs and sectors of activity and bring social benefits for citizens.

9. 2009 should see the conclusion, at the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December 2009, of a new international agreement on climate change, which would take over from the Kyoto Protocol after 2012. The Congress welcomes the strong mobilisation of local and regional authorities to ensure the recognition of their role in and contribution to the objectives of the new agreement and supports the drawing up of a persuasive message to be addressed to the governments parties to the negotiations<sup>4</sup>.

10. The Congress supports the Call launched at the Local Government Climate Change Leadership Summit, organised in Copenhagen in June 2009, on the initiative of the association of Danish local authorities in cooperation with European and globally leading local and regional government associations and networks to influence the international negotiations on climate change.

11. *In the light of the above, the Congress urges the local and regional authorities of the member and observer states of the Council of Europe to:*

a. call on their respective national governments so that, at the Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 15) in Copenhagen in December 2009, the fundamental role of local and regional authorities in the fight against climate change is recognised as well as the significance of their actions in the national implementation of a new ambitious climate agreement;

b. join their national delegations in order to participate actively in the Copenhagen world climate Conference and in the meetings specifically aimed at local and regional authorities;

c. take into account the recent Congress recommendations on climate change and on energy<sup>5</sup> when implementing their climate policy and to see to it that:

i. their strategy is based on two pillars: a reinforced mitigation policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and an adaptation policy to prepare for climate change and protect individuals and assets against its consequences;

ii. climate and energy policies are closely linked and that all sector-specific public policies are consistent;

iii. they highlight both territorial dynamism and individual commitment by citizens by taking a leading, co-ordinating role in a partnership-based approach in favour of the climate;

iv. ensure that proper training is provided to respond adequately to the new challenges.

12. *The Congress requests its Committee on Sustainable Development to:*

a. pursue its activities relating to various climate and energy matters, in particular those on risk governance of natural hazards due to climate modifications and those on the erosion of maritime facades of coastal towns and cities in Europe which are facing a probable dramatic rise in sea-levels;

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<sup>4</sup> The "Local Government Climate Roadmap" initiated by ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability, UCLG - United Cities and Local Governments, Metropolis, C 40 and the World Mayors Council on Climate Change, and the joint Declaration "Climate change: Global challenges - local solutions" by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, Climate Alliance, Energie-Cités and Eurocities on the occasion of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 14) held in Poznan (Poland).

<sup>5</sup> See footnote 3

b. to promote, in this respect, cooperation with its counterpart committee in the Committee of the Regions and to hold regular exchanges with national and international associations representing local and regional authorities.

## **B. DRAFT RECOMMENDATION<sup>6</sup>**

1. Global warming is one of the main challenges of the 21st century. The indisputable fact that the climate is changing and the growing impact of this phenomenon call for an urgent and global response by all policy-makers and for individual efforts by citizens to change their behaviour and lifestyles.

2. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe reaffirms its steadfast commitment to sustainable development and reiterates the positions it adopted in its recent work on climate change<sup>7</sup> and in particular its conviction that local and regional authorities are key players in combating climate change both through mitigation of its impact and through adaptation of territories, and that they have a strategic role in matters of energy efficiency.

3. The Congress fears that the present financial and economic crisis may serve as a pretext to further weaken the resources for ambitious action in the combat against global warming. On the contrary, it considers that this crisis constitutes an opportunity for States to undertake a programme of green recovery measures and green investments which will create new jobs.

4. Stabilising the climate is already proving to be harder than expected. Thus integrated greenhouse gas mitigation and adaptation initiatives undertaken over the next ten years will be of vital importance. Any delay in combating climate change will necessitate ever-more drastic measures later to reverse the trends.

5. The Congress is convinced that the challenge of climate change can be met and that this necessarily entails coordinated climate and energy policies as well as coherent policies between the different tiers of governance. It reaffirms the appropriateness of action at territorial levels of governance, both to implement innovative solutions and to raise public awareness in order to change of behaviour.

6. Furthermore, climate change impacts on the basic elements of human life and thus directly affects a range of fundamental rights (the right to life, suitable living conditions, safety, food, housing, health and water...). Although the debate initially focused on the physical and natural impacts of climate change, it is now time to take stock of the consequences on human societies.

7. The Congress is convinced that sustainable development as an aim has become a democratic issue and that the interdependence of human rights and sustainable development is genuine. Thus, the integration of the human rights dimension into an agreement which aims to combat climate change would provide more sustainable responses to the global challenge.

8. It considers that climate policies illustrate perfectly the need to "think globally, act locally" and calls on the Parties to the United Nations Convention on Climate Change to involve fully local and regional authorities in climate diplomacy.

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<sup>6</sup> See footnote 2

<sup>7</sup> Resolution 236 (2007) Climate change: approaches at local and regional level  
Resolution 248 (2008) Climate change: building adaptive capacity of local and regional authorities  
Resolution 262 (2008) Public local and regional action: for a new energy culture

9. The Congress welcomes the efforts of the European Union to protect the climate and in particular its initiatives recognising the role of local and regional authorities and their involvement, such as the “Covenant of Mayors” which brings together local authorities committed to achieving a significant percentage reduction in emissions and to energy efficiency in their local area.

10. The Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 15) meeting in Copenhagen in December 2009 should result in a new ambitious international treaty on climate change, which would take over after 2012 from the Kyoto Protocol. It is to be hoped that the planet's biggest polluters will henceforth set an example.

11. *In the light of this, the Congress requests the Committee of Ministers to:*

a. participate at the highest level, as observer to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP 15) in Copenhagen in December 2009 and bring an ambitious message concerning the impact of climate change on human rights and on the necessary involvement of local and regional authorities in the diplomatic process on climate as well as in the national implementation of the new international agreement;

b. take on board the effects of climate change in the intergovernmental activities of the Council of Europe, particularly in matters of migration, social cohesion, citizens' rights, health and the environment, and invite the steering committees to consider means of addressing climate change in their respective activity programmes.

12. *The Congress invites the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe to request the member and observer states to:*

a. acknowledge that local and regional authorities must be at the heart of all efforts to combat climate change both for mitigating its effects and for adapting their territories;

b. permit local and regional authorities to participate directly in the process of negotiating a new climate agreement, in particular by including them in their respective national delegations and by involving them in the discussions during the Conference of the Parties on climate change, as key partners in the actions to be undertaken.

13. *The Congress also requests the Committee of Ministers to invite the European Union to give broader recognition to the mitigation and adaptation measures implemented by local and regional authorities in the fight against climate change by facilitating their access to funding and by fostering networking and exchanges of experience.*

14. *The Congress invites the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe to support the recognition the role of local and regional authorities in the diplomatic processes relating to the climate and pursue its efforts to ensure that national parliaments are mobilised to this end.*

15. *The Congress invites the Human Rights Commissioner to integrate the environmental dimension into his mission to promote the respect of human rights.*

## **C. EXPLANATORY MEMORANDUM**

### **I. Introduction**

1. Climate change is no longer a distant threat but a very real phenomenon that constitutes one of the most serious economic, social and environmental challenges of this century.

2. This report of the Council of Europe Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is a reflection of the Congress' ongoing commitment to address the issue of sustainable development on the European continent and to respond to the global challenges facing European countries and, in particular, to the historical challenge posed by the global environmental crisis.

3. Aware of the magnitude and urgency of the challenges posed by climate change and energy issues and their direct impact on countries and on citizens' lives, the Congress has instructed its Committee on Sustainable Development to deal comprehensively with the fight against climate change and the search for greater energy efficiency.

4. Stabilisation of the greenhouse effect remains the real challenge and objective. This is now proving to be a more difficult challenge but one which is not impossible to meet. Although there are a number of obstacles, the Congress is convinced that the objectives can be achieved given genuine political will and co-operation on the part of local and regional authorities.

5. Financial constraints constitute one of these obstacles to the effective implementation of integrated adaptation and mitigation measures at local and regional levels. An adequate response to the challenges posed by climate change puts a significant financial burden on local and regional authorities. New possible financial means have to be put forward by the European Union and by the national governments for the infra-national levels to develop further longlasting solutions for combating the effects of climate change in a proactive manner.

6. However, the present financial and economic crisis must not be a pretext for reducing the resources available for combating climate change. On the contrary, it provides an opportunity for us to rethink our strategies and foster new behaviour patterns. It is an opportunity for green renewal and new green investments. Since climate policies reflect the "think global, act local" principle, it is important for local and regional authorities to work in their respective countries towards promoting a low-CO2 economy in which new jobs and areas of activity are created. This work will also have the advantage of reducing dependence on fossil fuels.

7. 2009 is a pivotal year for climate change as the parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change<sup>8</sup> will be meeting in Copenhagen in December to decide on a new climate agreement for the post-Kyoto period. This new agreement will have to lay down the action to be taken by both industrial and developing countries to reduce their release of pollutants after 2012.

8. Local and regional authorities have been stirred into action in the context of the December 2009 United Nations Conference on Climate. They are calling for their fundamental role in combating climate change to be recognised and for their official participation in the diplomatic processes involved.

## **II. The relevance of action by local and regional authorities in combating climate change**

9. The Congress' work on climate change has been based on the Resolution on combating the greenhouse effect and protecting the ozone layer adopted by the Congress in 1993. This Resolution emphasised the role of local and regional authorities and made a number of recommendations for practical action. In the years that followed, various important sectors associated with climate change policies, such as energy, transport and waste management, were the subject of recommendations and resolutions adopted by the Committee of Ministers and the Congress.

10. The most recent documents on these issues<sup>9</sup> focused on the crucial role to be played by local and regional authorities in the implementation of practical climate-protection measures. This is because local and regional authorities are on the front line when it comes to dealing with the consequences of climate change, which is making its effects felt more with every passing day. In most Council of Europe member states they are also responsible for sectors that have a very direct influence on carbon dioxide emissions.

11. The hearing on "climate change: Innovative approaches at local and regional level" organised by the Congress in Yerevan (Armenia) in October 2006 showed that in many cases local and regional

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<sup>8</sup> <http://en.cop15.dk/>

<sup>9</sup> Recommendation 215 (2007) and Resolution 236 (2007) Climate change: approaches at local and regional level – Rapporteur A. Mediratta (United Kingdom, L, EPP/CD).

authorities have taken the initiative of adopting specific, novel approaches in order to combat global warming.

12. Their climate policies, which are very often proactive in nature, cover the various areas concerned: energy issues, mobility and public transport, regional and urban planning, water management, waste management, etc. In this connection, the report that followed the hearing emphasised the need for the close co-ordination of climate and energy policies and for the horizontal and vertical harmonisation of sectoral policies and policies carried out by the various levels of governance.

13. Local and regional authorities are thus key players when it comes to ensuring that climate change does not become any more serious and less controllable. Being convinced that resolute public action is necessary both for mitigating its effects and for local and regional adaptation, the Congress emphasised, in the documents that it subsequently adopted, the need to improve local and regional authorities' ability to adapt to the new climate situation<sup>10</sup>.

14. A workshop on "Adaptation to climate change: Building adaptive capacity of local and regional authorities", held in Strasbourg in September 2007, made it possible to better define adaptation policies in order to ensure the protection of people, property and resources and generally reduce local and regional vulnerability to the consequences of meteorological hazards. It analysed the various approaches adopted in the European regions, which are affected in different ways by climate change.

15. The Congress adopted recommendations in this connection in March 2008 and urged that adaptation policies be made part of a progressive approach aimed at anticipating future changes, and that they be based on a risk and vulnerability assessment. Adaptation also requires a cross-cutting approach and dynamic planning to facilitate responsive, rapid and flexible decision-making. The Congress also pointed out that, given the proven link between human activity and climate change and the uncertainties in climate change scenarios, awareness-raising to improve citizens' understanding of what is at stake is crucial to successful adaptation towards climate-proof cities and regions.

16. In addition, while the local and regional authorities are central for both the mitigation of climate change and for adaptation of localities to its effects, their role is also strategic in terms of energy efficiency and decentralised energy production. This is why the Congress pointed the need for a new energy culture<sup>11</sup> and for specific local and regional public action in this connection.

17. The energy issue is again high on the agenda for two main reasons: climate change and the need for a secure supply of energy at affordable prices. A massive reduction in energy intensity in the industrial countries and larger supplies of renewable energies are the key to initiating change.

18. Multilateral agreements and European and national decisions will not in themselves create the technical conditions necessary for the substantial changes required to rise to these challenges. Over 75% of energy is consumed in towns and cities for housing, travel, work, entertainment, etc. A fundamental shift is impossible without a strong commitment from local and regional authorities, which, being close to the public and economic operators, can act as a catalyst for change.

19. Local and regional authorities must accordingly play a major role in setting energy policies geared mainly towards energy efficiency, energy savings, improved energy output and renewable energy. Moreover, a sustainable local energy policy will have a major beneficial impact on local development, economic activities, employment, the local and global environment, quality of life and the attractiveness of towns and cities. Furthermore, it will do much to alleviate the precarious energy supply situation of inhabitants experiencing hardship.

20. The local and regional levels have proved the relevance of their work both by implementing innovative measures in their various areas of responsibility and by raising public awareness in order to encourage a change of behaviour. In this connection, the spread of local and regional climate policies, the mobilisation of European local and regional authorities in the global effort to reduce

<sup>10</sup> Recommendation 231 (2008) and Resolution 248 (2008) Climate change: building adaptive capacity of local and regional authorities - Rapporteurs I. Franzen (Germany, R, SOC) and S. Orlova (Russian Federation, R, EPP/CD).

<sup>11</sup> Recommendation 243 (2008) and Resolution 262 (2008) Public local and regional action: for a new energy culture - Rapporteurs O. Luk'ianchenko (Ukraine, L, EPP/CD) and M. Spinosa (Italy, R, SOC).

emissions and the exemplary commitment of those authorities through such initiatives as the Covenant of Mayors for energy efficiency<sup>12</sup> should be welcomed. It is through their policies on mobility and transport, urban and regional planning, energy and housing that local and regional authorities can make a significant contribution to lowering greenhouse gas emissions and to adapting both to the new climatic conditions and to the need to reduce local and regional vulnerability.

21. Through its new recommendations, the Congress wishes to reiterate its position on the need to recognise local and regional authorities' fundamental role and important contribution to combating climate change and to protecting people and property from its consequences. This perspective will be brought to the Copenhagen climate summit.

### **III. 2009: a pivotal year for the fight against climate change**

22. 2009 is a key year as far as climate change is concerned. From 7 to 18 December, the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change will be held in Copenhagen, Denmark, where the international community will have to decide on follow-up to the Kyoto Protocol. This is an extremely important meeting and its aim is to conclude the negotiations on a new climate agreement, which will have to determine the action that both industrial and developing countries will need to take to lower their release of pollutants after 2012.

23. This meeting is a crucial step in a process that began in 1992 at the United Nations Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. The Kyoto Protocol was a first step towards reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It was adopted in 1997 and entered into force in 2005 and has now been ratified by 192 states, with the exception of the United States, which has rejected it; it requires the industrial countries to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 5% by the end of 2012 in comparison with the 1990 rates.

24. The international negotiations on the subject of climate change post Kyoto began in Bali in December 2007 at the Conference of the Parties (COP 13). The roadmap for nations for the period after 2012 was partially drawn up at the Climate Change Conference in Poznań (COP 14) and should lead to the adoption of a new agreement in Copenhagen at the end of 2009 (COP 15).

25. The Copenhagen agreement will thus have to lay down new global objectives for reducing emissions and will serve as a basis for strengthening the capacity of countries to adapt to climate change.

26. The challenge of Copenhagen is twofold since the parties have to enter into quantified commitments that are much more substantial than those of the very controversial Kyoto Protocol. They also have to persuade countries with very high emissions that are still refusing to sign up to it, including not only the United States and China but also the large developing countries such as India, Indonesia, Iran, Brazil, Mexico and South Africa (which also produce substantial CO<sub>2</sub> emissions) to participate in the global effort. The discussions are based on irrefutable scientific evidence that climate change is taking place and will become dangerous beyond a temperature rise of 2°C in comparison with pre-industrial levels.

27. It will nonetheless be more difficult than planned to reach an ambitious agreement as most countries are today trying to shirk their commitment to meeting the objectives, and the financial crisis has changed the situation. This is despite American President Barack Obama's commitment to address global warming immediately, while China, the planet's second-biggest polluter, has embarked on a process designed to lower its emissions by 2010.

28. The European Union has made climate change one of its priorities and hopes that the industrial countries will play a key role. In Poznań, it led by example: its leaders reached an agreement on ambitious objectives for protecting the climate, in particular a 20% reduction in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions by 2020.

29. In addition, early in 2009 the European Commission put forward its proposals for a new and ambitious global agreement on combating climate change to be presented in Copenhagen, as well as

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.eumayors.eu/>



details of possible funding arrangements. For example, the industrial countries and multilateral institutions should grant the developing countries much more financial assistance in order to help them make their contribution to the fight against climate change.

30. The European Commission's proposals also comprise the creation of a carbon trading market across the OECD countries by 2015 and of novel sources of international funding based on countries' emissions and their ability to contribute.

31. The Copenhagen agreement should also provide for a framework for helping countries adapt to the inevitable consequences of climate change. All industrial and developing countries should be required to draw up national adaptation strategies. Adaptation assistance would be provided to the most vulnerable countries and to the small developing island states.

32. Finally, the negotiations on a new climate agreement should include the human rights dimension. Nowadays, the right to a healthy environment is considered to be a fundamental human right, thus environmental protection is a prerequisite for the effective enjoyment of human rights. Rights, such as the right to life and health, to food and water, to the protection of property and freedom of movement can only be fully enjoyed in a sound environment. Hence, the fight against climate change, the need for sustainable development and the protection of human rights are interdependent and interrelated.

#### **IV. Recognising the local and regional authorities' role in the diplomatic processes relating to climate change**

33. Local and regional authorities are already very much involved in active policies to deal with greenhouse gas emissions and in strategies aimed at adapting to the consequences of climate change. Since the Bali Conference of the Parties, they have rallied to this cause with their national and international associations. The "Bali-Poznań-Copenhagen Local Government Climate Roadmap" was drawn up with the aim of preparing the proposals for presentation to the representatives of states at the Poznań and Copenhagen conferences. This strategy also provides for the meaningful participation of the local and regional authorities in the international climate change negotiation process.

34. Through their involvement local and regional authorities are putting the accent on their fundamental role in, and their significant contribution to, the attainment of European and international objectives. This latter, however, will depend on their commitment to work alongside States, and the European Union, for EU member states.

35. The objective of these initiatives is to give local and regional public action a higher profile and to integrate local and regional authorities in the global diplomatic process concerning climate change. In concrete terms, the aim, as at the Rio Summit on Sustainable Development, is to adopt a chapter specifically devoted to local and regional authorities' role as key players in combating climate change. Accordingly, they would like the position and role of the local and regional tiers of government to be fully identified, recognised and supported when inter-state negotiations take place.

36. These proposals and the message for the parties to the negotiations and the national governments were discussed and formalised at two major events centred on local and regional authorities: the Local Government Summit<sup>13</sup> in Poznań from 9 to 11 December 2008 and the Local Government Climate Change Leadership Summit<sup>14</sup> in Copenhagen from 2 to 4 June 2009.

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<sup>13</sup> Joint statement "Climate Change: Global Challenges - Local Solutions" by the main European networks of local and regional authorities: Council of European Municipalities and Regions, Climate Alliance, Energie-Cités and Eurocities.

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.kl.dk/localclimatesummit>

Local Government Climate Change Leadership Summit organised by the Danish association of local authorities Local Government Denmark in cooperation with the European and globally leading associations UCLG - United Cities and Local Governments and ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability, Metropolis, C40 and the World Mayors Council on Climate Change.

## **V. Conclusion**

37. Climate change will have repercussions in all areas of life and the multiple environmental upheavals expected will considerably exacerbate all the problems already confronting our societies.

38. The sustainable development objective has become a democratic challenge and local and regional authorities involved in the issue of global warming and sustainable development can make a real contribution to responding to this environmental challenge through shared decision-making and through initiatives that alert citizens to their responsibilities on this issue.

39. The magnitude of global warming calls for lasting solutions, which should not be limited by considerations connected with the present financial and economic crisis. There needs to be co-ordinated and complementary action at the various levels of governance, action that recognises the relevance of the local and regional tiers of government not only in the work to stabilise the climate but also in ensuring appropriate local and regional adaptation. The Copenhagen negotiations will be crucially important in this connection.

40. In addition, climate change has a direct impact on a set of fundamental rights. The interdependence of human rights and climate change and, more broadly, sustainable development is a reality. Accordingly, the negotiations on a new climate agreement should include the human rights dimension in order to enable more lasting responses to be made to this universal challenge and to protect the right to a healthy environment for the present and future generations.