

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 339 (2012)¹ Making cities resilient

1. Urban areas and cities face climate threats such as rising temperatures, rising sea levels, heavy or declining precipitation, drought and also storms, which sometimes take on the proportions of disasters and have become more frequent in recent decades.

2. The high concentration of people in cities and the complexity of the systems which interact and provide goods and services further increase the potential damage to human beings and local economies.

3. Cities are therefore particularly vulnerable to these trends and must take up the challenge of reducing disaster risks and enhancing their resilience to climate change and disasters through mitigation and adaptation measures.

4. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe has long shown its concern about climate change and its impact on cities, in particular by proposing “40 measures in dealing with natural hazards” (2005)² and adopting Resolution 248 (2008) on climate change: building adaptive capacity of local and regional authorities, and more recently Resolution 317 (2010) on coastal towns and cities tackling threats from the sea.

5. In the Slavutych Appeal launched in 2006,³ 20 years after the Chernobyl disaster, the Congress set out principles to guide public authorities in the various areas of nuclear safety (such as the involvement of local and regional authorities, neighbourhood solidarity, transparency and consultation of citizens).

6. Following the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami which hit Japan on 11 March 2011, the Congress held a debate on 23 March 2011, during its 20th session, with the Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR),⁴ which called on it to support the United Nations world disaster reduction campaign, Making Cities Resilient. This call followed on from co-operation dating back more than 10 years with the Council of Europe under the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA).^{5 6}

7. The objectives of the campaign are:

a. to raise the awareness of citizens and governments of the benefits of reducing risks at the urban level;

b. to use local government budgets in a smart way, which enhances the resilience of infrastructure and reduces disaster risk – in other words, mainstreaming disaster risk reduction into urban planning and development at the decision-making level;

c. to include disaster risk reduction in participatory development and planning processes at the city level to protect critical infrastructure.⁷

8. The campaign underlines the need to establish long-term partnerships to achieve these objectives.

9. As the efforts of the Congress are fully in line with the objectives of the campaign, it calls on local and regional authorities in Council of Europe member states to:

a. sign up to the UNISDR Making Cities Resilient campaign and thereby undertake to develop and implement a local adaptation process and contribute to the campaign as follows:

i. by sharing best practices with other cities focusing on governance, sustainable land use, urban planning and social aspects, while serving as replicators of best practices identified elsewhere;

ii. by developing partnerships with other local authorities in their countries, in Europe or in lower-income countries;

iii. by designing and testing innovative schemes in partnership with different players (including business), thereby creating knowledge transfers;

iv. by lobbying – themselves and/or through city networks – for enhanced awareness of disaster risk reduction;

b. adopt an integrated approach to the issues of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation and mitigation (transport, communication, housing, urban green spaces, water and electricity supply, waste removal systems, food production, etc.) and other non-climate related issues such as demographic impacts. The vision of a resilient city has to be a cross-cutting one, addressing quality of life, and be embedded within sustainability criteria;

c. boost their capacity in terms of building resilience to climate change and natural disasters, disaster risk management and climate change adaptation;

d. draw up and implement strategic programmes and action plans based on the integrated management system described in the explanatory memorandum.

10. The Congress also:

a. encourages the sharing of knowledge between national authorities of the Council of Europe member states and their cities and the development of sharing platforms.⁸ In addressing disaster risk, climate change adaptation and resilience building, it is necessary to assign a high value to traditional knowledge and exploit its potential;

b. calls for the development of an overarching, equitable multilevel (European, national, regional and local) governance framework for disaster risk management and resilience building throughout Europe, which the actions of European cities must harmonise with.

11. Lastly, the Congress:

a. intends maintaining the mutually beneficial links with the United Nations campaign and Council of Europe initiatives,

in particular those of the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement, at local level and to hold a conference on climate change and human rights in late 2012;

b. welcomes the decision by ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability to hold annual congresses of resilient cities to share knowledge and experience, as well as the development of a common integrated approach, and instructs its Current Affairs Committee to continue its partnership with the organisation.

1. Debated and approved by the Chamber of Local Authorities on 21 March 2012 and adopted by the Congress on 22 March 2012, 3rd Sitting (see Document CPL(22)2, explanatory memorandum), rapporteur: P.B. Andersen, Denmark (L, SOC).

2. “Natural and industrial disasters – local authorities facing emergencies: 40 measures in dealing with natural hazards” (2005).

3. Recommendation 191 (2006) on Chernobyl, 20 years on: local and regional authorities dealing with disasters.

4. Set up by the UN General Assembly in 2000.

5. A platform for co-operation between European and Southern Mediterranean countries in the field of major natural hazards. Established in 1987, the EUR-OPA Agreement has 26 member states, that is 23 Council of Europe members and three non-members of the Council (Algeria, Lebanon and Morocco): http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/majorhazards/presentation/presentation_en.asp

6. A memorandum of understanding between the Council of Europe and the Secretariat of the International Disaster Reduction Strategy (UNISDR) was signed in April 2008.

7. UNISDR, “Making Cities Resilient – ‘My city is getting ready’ – World Disaster Reduction Campaign 2010-11: Frequently asked questions”. Available at: www.unisdr.org

8. Such as the EU’s Clearinghouse Mechanism (to be released in March 2012) and the existing weADAPT platform: <http://weadapt.org/>.