

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 261 (2008)¹ A second annual plenary session of the Congress

1. For more than fifty years, the Conference of Local Authorities of Europe first of all and then the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe have been working and continue to work to bring about strong local and regional democracy, which is an essential foundation for a Europe of democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

2. As a result of its commitment, its core texts, such as the European Charter of Local Self-Government, and its monitoring of local and regional democracy in member states, the Congress has acquired institutional maturity and political influence making it a unique forum for political dialogue and co-operation between European local and regional authorities within the Council of Europe member states.

3. Active in all spheres of relevance to local and regional authorities, the Congress also develops and maintains dialogue and co-operation with numerous outside partners, both in Europe and beyond. It has, for example, developed close practical co-operation with the European Union Committee of the Regions, the countries on the southern shore of the Mediterranean, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and non-European local and regional authorities.

4. The Congress's enhanced role as a political platform and forum for dialogue makes it essential for it to be organised in such a way as to substantially strengthen the plenary sessions of the Congress and its two Chambers.

5. The Committee of Ministers, at the time of the revision of the Congress Charter in 2007, accepted the possibility, subject to affordability, of holding more than one plenary session per year.

6. Accordingly, the Bureau of the Congress has looked at the possibility of rearranging the Congress's yearly activities with a view to holding a second annual plenary session, and – having ascertained that this would be financially feasible – is in favour of holding a second annual plenary session with effect from 2009.

7. The Bureau of the Congress has taken note of the fact that, while welcoming the development of the Congress and encouraging it in its new momentum, the Committee of Ministers seems determined to adopt a zero growth budget for the Council of Europe in 2009 and not to grant the requests for increases submitted by the Congress in Recommendation 238 (2008) on resources and budget of the Congress for 2009.

8. Despite this, the Bureau considers it important to give high priority to organising a second plenary session and, confidently expecting a more favourable configuration in subsequent budgetary exercises, wishes to do so as from 2009 with a reduction of other budgetary items.

9. Consequently, having taken note of the arguments and the position of its Bureau, the Congress:

a. believes that it is important for the organisation of the Congress's activities to reflect its heightened institutional role in a Europe in which local democracy is a key condition for building a society based on peace, democracy and stability;

b. shares the position of its Bureau and decides, with effect from 2009, to meet in two annual plenary sessions, to be held in the spring and autumn of each year, to replace the plenary session held at the end of May;

c. instructs the Bureau to determine the session dates in accordance with Rule 1.3 of the Congress Rules of Procedure.

10. The joint meetings of the Standing Committee and the statutory committees, referred to as the spring and autumn sessions, will therefore no longer be necessary and the Standing Committee will normally meet in the intervening period.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 29 May 2008, 3rd Sitting (see Document CG(15)20RES, draft resolution presented by H. Skard (Norway, L, SOC), rapporteur).