

22 April 2021

## WORLD FORUM FOR DEMOCRACY

Round table on:

### **“Let’s talk local: cities and citizens in the fight against climate change”**

organised by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities

26 April 2021, 14 :00-16 :30 CEST, via KUDO platform  
Interpretation EN – FR

The climate crisis and its environmental, social and economic consequences constitute a major challenge for our societies. Cities and citizens are in the front line in the face of the climate emergency. They are hard hit by global warming and climate change, which exacerbates extreme weather events and increases the risk of climatic disasters (drought, floods, pollution etc.). While the attractiveness of cities is an important contributor to climate change, many municipalities have understood the need to foster the development of low-carbon and climate-resilient cities, and have committed to a more environmentally friendly model that tries to cope with climate change.

Environmental protection is a central issue at all levels of governance. However, local authorities are key actors in combating climate change and can partly offset the inaction of certain governments.

Local democracy plays a fundamental role in raising awareness of the climate issue, but also in solving the concrete problems of citizens and businesses. Local elected representatives are aware of the specificities of communities and can influence many factors related to climate change, from local production and consumption patterns to land and energy use planning, private and public transport choices, etc. Local democracy is a key element in the development of a sustainable development strategy, not to mention that it is mainly at the local and regional level that citizens are mobilising to call for concrete environmental action.

For several years now, we have seen numerous climate marches and citizen mobilisation around the world. This indicates a real desire on the part of society to make up for the government inaction. The global movement for climate justice is growing, and citizens everywhere are going to court to protect their rights, those of future generations and of nature. This is why local authorities must integrate civil society in the process of finding adequate local responses to the climate crisis.

Faced with the need to integrate local authorities in the development of national and international climate strategies, local elected representatives can rely on the support of European-level organisations working with local and regional authorities in order to defend and amplify their voice at the international level and make local initiatives in the fight against climate change visible.

In the framework of the World Forum for Democracy, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities is organising a webinar on “let’s talk local: cities and citizens in the fight against climate change” which will present successful local and regional initiatives for sustainability and green transition, highlighting projects with strong citizen participation. The workshop will be a space to exchange good practices and brainstorm about new opportunities at local and regional level.

## PROGRAMME

Opening statement:

- 14 :00**
- **Leendert VERBEEK**, Congress President
  - **Jeanne BARSEGHIAN**, Mayor of Strasbourg, France

**14 :15**     **Session 1: Learning Locally – Cities and citizens coming together to combat climate change**

Moderator: **Gerhard ERMISCHER**, Vice Chair, Democracy, Social Cohesion and Global Challenges Committee, Conference of International NGOs

Panellists:

- **Kirstine BILLE**, Municipal Councillor in Syddjurs, Congress Member, Denmark (SOC/G/PD)
- **Jérôme LHOTE**, Steering of the Climate Mandate, France
- **Saara ILVESSALO**, Municipal Councillor in Turku, Congress Member, Finland (SOC/G/PD)
- **Siobhan LEESE**, Member of the Leeds Climate Change Citizens' Jury, United Kingdom
- **Julia DUMAY**, Municipal Councillor in Strasbourg, Congress Member, France (SOC/G/PD) (tbc)
- **Frédéric BIERRY**, President of the European Collectivity of Alsace, France (EPP) (tbc)

**14 :45**     **Discussion**

**15 :15**     **Session 2: Going Beyond Local – Bringing local expertise to the (inter)national level**

Moderator: **Jean-Pierre LIOUVILLE**, Regional Councillor of the Region Grand Est, Congress member, France (SOC/G/PD)

Panellists:

- **Vasco CORDEIRO**, Member of the Autonomous Region of Azores, Member of the environment, climate change and energy Commission of the EU Committee of the Regions, Portugal (SOC/G/PD)
- **Natasa VUCKOVIC**, Member of European Association for Local Democracy (ALDA)
- **Martin HORN**, Mayor of Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany
- **José BENLLOCH FERNANDEZ**, Mayor of Vila-real, Member of the Spanish Federation of Municipalities and Provinces (FEMP), Congress member, Spain (SOC/G/PD)
- **Gunn Marit HELGESEN**, County Councillor of Telemark, Congress Vice-President, Norway (EPP/CCE)

**15 :45**     **Discussion**

**16 :15**     Closing statement: **Vladimir PREBILIC**, Spokesperson of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities on Climate Change and Environment, Mayor of Kocevje, Slovenia (SOC/G/PD)