

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 214 (2006)¹ on water management: a European contribution to the 4th World Water Forum

1. Water management is an essential factor for the sustainable development of our planet, which, in the face of the global water crisis at the beginning of the 21st century, requires the active participation of everyone and of all levels of governance.

2. At world level the situation of water resources is very worrying. In Europe the situation differs from one country to another, but is nevertheless a cause for concern in certain member states.

3. Water governance has implications in numerous sectors such as health and food security, economic development, land use and conservation of resources. This requires integrated management solutions and a multi-sectoral, multi-partner approach, with a view to promoting sustainable use and conservation of resources.

4. The Congress considers that there is a pressing need for effective integration of the various local-level policies such as spatial development and town planning strategies.

5. Furthermore, the Congress wishes to promote a new water culture based on shared responsibilities and on new individual and collective attitudes to water.

6. It is also important to take into account that water basins do not have frontiers and levels of governance and that the question of water provision, sanitation and protection of resources, while technical, nonetheless raises political issues. Local and regional authorities themselves have a growing role to play, in partnership with other decision-making levels (governments and parliaments), in liaison with the scientific community and the private sector and in co-operation with non-governmental organisations and civil society.

7. In the face of these challenges, and in order to foster knowledge and expertise and the exchange of information, the Congress considers it essential to develop co-operation between local and regional authorities, in particular across borders.

8. The Congress welcomes the Action Plan adopted at the 3rd Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe (Warsaw, 16 and 17 May 2005), which reaffirms the member states' commitment to "improving the quality of life for citizens" by developing and supporting integrated policies in a "sustainable development perspective".²

9. In this spirit, the Congress wishes to stress that the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe – forerunner among international organisations – adopted in 1967 the European Water Charter, replacing it in 2001 with the European Charter on Water Resources. This text is of current relevance and constitutes a reference document for Congress activities.

10. Furthermore, the Water Framework Directive, adopted by the European Union on 23 October 2000 is a regulatory framework applicable in the EU member states and a reference for Council of Europe countries not members of the European Union.

11. The Congress welcomes the holding of the 4th World Water Forum in Mexico from 16 to 22 March 2006 and its theme "Local Actions for a Global Challenge". The event enabled local and regional authorities to participate in an entire week of proceedings, particularly in the ministerial conference.

12. The Congress recalls that as part of the preparations for the forum, it organised jointly with the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, in the context of the European Solidarity Week for Water, a conference on "Water management: a shared responsibility" on 20 and 21 October 2005. The messages from this conference constituted a contribution to the European regional report presented in Mexico.

13. The Congress hails the results of this major international event to promote the cause of water and provide an opportunity for discussion and exchanges between all those involved in water policy and particularly welcomes the role which the ministerial declaration recognises for local authorities.

14. In this context, the Congress calls on local and regional authorities of Council of Europe member states to:

a. contribute to implementing, within the ambit of their respective powers, a pattern of water resource management that will provide access to water and sanitation which is adequate in terms of quantity, quality and continuity;

b. develop and enhance their technical, human and financial capacities to enable them to assume their responsibilities;

c. promote the sharing of experience and improve knowledge and expertise regarding water-related issues;

d. provide appropriate training for local elected representatives and local and regional government staff and at the same time foster education and awareness-raising for all members of the public concerning the stakes and efforts involved in conservation of water resources;

e. participate, at their own level, in the international efforts to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, monitor and take part in international events and

ensure the honouring of commitments entered into by their national authorities in this respect.

15. The Congress asks its Committee on Sustainable Development to:

a. continue to keep water-related issues under specific review and help local and regional authorities meet their responsibilities to the full;

b. continue its co-operation with the Parliamentary Assembly and study the feasibility of setting up a joint

Parliamentary Assembly/Congress working group with a view to devising a common strategy;

c. develop co-operation with the committee of the European Union's Committee of the Regions dealing with water-related fields.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 31 May 2006, 2nd Sitting (see Document CG (13) 8, draft resolution presented by K. Whitmore (United Kingdom, R, ILDG), rapporteur).

2. Action Plan, II-7.