

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 166 (2003)¹ on follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development

The Congress,

1. Having regard to:

a. the report on follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development, presented by Mr Keith Whitmore (United Kingdom, R) on behalf of the Committee on Sustainable Development;

b. earlier texts adopted by the Congress on questions relating to sustainable development, including Resolution 126 (2002) on Rio+10: towards the next World Summit on Sustainable Development;

c. the key documents of the World Summit, including the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, the Plan of Implementation, the Johannesburg Call and the Local Government Declaration for the World Summit on Sustainable Development;

2. Considering that:

a. local sustainability is a key factor to socio-economic development and quality of life, and therefore an essential element requiring the attention of all spheres of government, civil society and the private sector;

b. since the 1992 Rio Summit, more than 5 000 Local Agenda 21 processes have been started in Europe. Local sustainability must now become present in all policies and solutions, moving from agenda to action in order to ensure an accelerated implementation of sustainable development;

c. sustainable development calls for an integrated approach to creating sustainable communities and cities. Every policy, plan or action towards liveable cities must at the same time protect global common goods upon which people's lives depend: air, climate, water, soil, biodiversity, health and food;

d. sustainable water management and climate protection are issues of multi-level governance in which local and regional authorities need to have a recognised and distinct role;

e. as local and regional authorities worldwide strive to move from agenda to action in the post-Johannesburg decade, Local Action 21 will serve as the "motto, mandate and movement" towards change. It will be grounded in action to create sustainable communities and cities;

f. in order to ensure that daily decision making at the local level contributes to local sustainability, local authorities

in Europe need to be given true powers to implement sustainability. In national legislation, local sustainability must become entrenched and be backed with reasonable resources;

g. national and local sustainability strategies should be further integrated and interlinked, in order to prevent national policies counteracting local initiatives. There is a need for more structural co-operation with national governments on sustainability issues. Local Agenda 21 and Local Action 21 programmes should become an integral part of national policy areas, especially the environmental sector;

h. the economic and financial framework within which local and regional authorities operate must be restructured to support and facilitate sustainable development and discourage unsustainable decision making;

3. Calls on European local and regional authorities to:

a. reduce cities' and regions' further contribution to the worldwide depletion of resources and environmental degradation, which have severe repercussions on cities and their inhabitants;

b. engage in Local Action 21 processes and involve citizens and stakeholders in sustainable development planning to jointly agree on a vision, goals and a local action plan towards sustainability;

c. direct all tools existing at the local and regional level, such as spatial planning, budgeting and daily decision making towards sustainable development. New tools are especially needed to market/promote sustainability among citizens and to motivate continued participation in Local Action 21 processes;

d. implement economic incentives that render unsustainable decisions too expensive in order to motivate changes of consumption patterns as well as traditionally unsustainable choices;

e. actively pursue "green" public procurement policies, which provide an effective tool for developing sustainable patterns of production and consumption. Green procurement is one of the most effective mechanisms currently available for using the market to achieve sustainable production and consumption patterns – one of the key objectives of the Plan of Implementation adopted in Johannesburg;

f. assess the consequences of climate change on the local level beyond 2050 and start working on harmonised, effective tools to mitigate climate change impact. For example, by purchasing green electricity, public authorities could reduce greenhouse-gas emissions in Europe to an extent matching 20% of the European Union Kyoto commitments;

g. promote an efficient use of natural resources and the switch from fossil to renewable energy in its various forms in order that more liveable and stable environmental conditions can be provided to the community in the longer

term. An eco-efficient city is better prepared for future global environmental resource conditions;

h. demand an increased role and joint responsibility in achieving sustainable water management in Europe in order to overcome regionally differentiated technical, environmental, and health related requirements;

i. encourage public private partnerships (PPP) to accelerate local sustainability in Europe. PPP require empowered and well informed local governments who are able to define clear quality criteria for any products and services delivered by the private sector so as to ensure that benefits are shared between private and public partners;

j. introduce state-of-the-art systems and tools in municipal management to ensure unwavering implementation, effective monitoring and continual improvement. A stronger use of information technologies and direct communication should increase public awareness and co-operation with local stakeholders;

k. improve the ability of communities to be prepared for, and cope with unexpected events such as natural or industrial disasters and economic crises, and by ensuring urban infrastructure designed to withstand events such as earthquakes, heat and drought, floods etc.;

l. foster a political culture of community involvement, stakeholder participation and consensus building in order to make our communities and cities more sustainable. The principles of participatory governance – democracy, consultation, transparency and accountability – should be

promoted with the aim of strengthening the sustainability movement;

m. promote the idea of national sustainable development conferences to bring together national, regional and local governments and to form strategic working alliances;

4. Calls on the Committee on Sustainable Development to:

a. develop appropriate proposals to help bring about the summit's priority goals and targets;

b. contribute to the practical delivery of the summit's outcomes by stimulating further action on sustainable development at local and regional level in Europe;

c. co-operate with all relevant committees and groups of experts of the Council of Europe in order to consider the implications of the Plan of Implementation and to make sure their future programmes reflect the goals of the summit;

d. explore the possibilities of a closer working collaboration with the European Sustainable Cities & Towns Campaign.

1. Debated and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 26 November 2003 (see Document CG (10) 24, draft resolution presented by Mr K. Whitmore, rapporteur).