

## **THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES**

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### **Resolution 272 (2008)<sup>1</sup>**

#### **Local consequences in the conflict zone in the South Caucasus: support from European local and regional authorities**

1. Europe's local and regional authorities cannot look on and do nothing about the serious problems that their counterparts affected by the conflict now face.

2. Local and regional authorities affected by the conflict are confronted with situations which they must deal with straight away in co-operation with the government, civil society and international aid. When it comes to practical action at grassroots level, they are the first in line, but the challenges they face and the needs they must satisfy are out of all proportion to their financial and human resources and their experience.

3. The President of the Congress visited Georgia (9-11 September 2008), and furthermore the Congress observed the local elections in Adjara, Georgia, on 3 November 2008. Following the meetings with representatives of local, national and international authorities on these occasions, the Congress intends both to provide assistance itself in its areas of competence and to encourage Europe's other local and regional authorities to help their counterparts affected by the conflict.

4. Individually or through national or international associations European local and regional authorities can pool their resources and those of their local partners and investigate together how to provide practical aid to the affected local and regional authorities. They can provide practical support and assistance in all the areas that fall within their competence and their expertise.

5. These local activities can draw, in particular, on existing links under twinning arrangements or other types of agreement.

6. Aid may take diverse forms ranging from donations and financial contributions to the supply of experts in specific areas. Municipalities which have experienced similar situations themselves after conflicts or natural disasters are particularly suited to providing expertise and advice.

7. Assistance must go both to the local authorities directly affected by the conflict and to those indirectly affected, mainly owing to major displacements of people. All international assistance programmes should be based on principles of territorial integrity and sovereignty of Council of Europe member states.

8. In the short term, the aim of assistance should be to:

*a.* alleviate the suffering and the difficulties encountered by the wounded and those forced to leave their homes. Material and logistical support must be provided to offer these people accommodation and health care and satisfy their basic needs, as well as helping them with administrative formalities, and local authorities must be assisted to identify and locate these people;

*b.* re-establish normal schooling for displaced children and children whose schools were affected by the conflict;

*c.* organise and facilitate the reconstruction and repair of infrastructure affected by the conflict and restore public services (supply and communication networks, transport, administrative services, etc.);

*d.* advise and support local authorities in their role of alerting the public to risks linked to remnants of the war (anti-personnel mines, ruined buildings, etc.).

9. In the medium and longer term, the aims of assistance from the European local and regional authorities and the Congress should be:

*a.* to consolidate local and regional democracy in the area of the conflict;

*b.* to foster dialogue and reconciliation;

*c.* to facilitate the return of displaced persons.

10. The Congress should also work with the National Association of Local Authorities of Georgia (NALAG) and the Georgian national delegation to help with the following tasks:

*a.* support the work of the Kutaisi Local Democracy Agency (LDA) in Georgia and call for increased support from its European local partners;

*b.* promote the development of the Local Democracy Agencies network in Georgia and the South Caucasian countries in order to contribute actively to stabilising the region through European multilateral, decentralised co-operation work;

*c.* strengthen local democracy and develop regional democracy where it can be of benefit; there is a particular need to review the status of Adjara, especially as regards the appointment of its head of government by the central government;

*d.* contribute its expertise and support to the exchange of skills for the benefit of local representatives from the area of the conflict, particularly through the training of representatives and staff by the European Network of Training Organisations for local and regional authorities (ENTO).

11. The Congress:

*a.* decides to widely disseminate this appeal to its members and the European local and regional authorities through national and international associations of local and regional authorities;

*b.* expresses the hope that all parties will honour the ceasefire agreement;

*c.* calls on local and regional authorities of all parties to the conflict, namely Georgia, Russia and the de facto authorities in South Ossetia to help to restore full local self-government in the areas affected and do everything in their power to ensure that infrastructure and services begin to function properly as quickly as possible, that people and property are safe and facilitate the effective arrival of aid;

*d.* instructs its Bureau to keep track of changes in the local consequences of the conflict and implement practical measures in its areas of competence, such as those mentioned above, including measures forming part of its priorities for 2009 and 2010;

*e.* undertakes to monitor and support the development of local and regional democracy in this part of Europe, particularly in the conflict areas;

*f.* asks its Institutional Committee to prepare, in due time, a new report on local and regional democracy in Georgia;

*g.* shares, in particular, the positions taken by the Parliamentary Assembly, expressed in its Resolution 1633 (2008) and its Recommendation 1846 (2008), as well as the priorities for human rights protection identified by the Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights after his special missions in the areas affected by the conflict;

*h.* will support the activities of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, the Committee of Ministers, the Commissioner for Human Rights and the Council of Europe Development Bank.

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1. Debated and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 2 December 2008 (see Document CG(15)31RES, draft resolution presented by D. Suica (Croatia, L, EPP/CD), rapporteur).