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FIFTH SESSION

(Strasbourg, 26 - 28 May 1998)

PRESIDENT'S ACTIVITIES REPORT

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ACTIVITIES REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE CONGRESS
FOR THE INTER-SESSION PERIOD (MAY 1997-MAY 1998)

I. INTRODUCTION

When I was elected President of the Congress two years ago I decided to carry out my term of office based on the following three priority areas:

- democracy for peace
- the economy at the service of democracy, and
- the environment for life.

After two years' work, I am gratified to see that in all three areas we have obtained practical results:

I.1 *Democracy for peace*

Throughout my term of office, I have striven to ensure the viability of and to enhance a network which the Congress had begun to develop, namely the local democracy embassies which enable a number of countries from the former Yugoslavia to lay down the foundations of local democracy, respect for others and the functioning of civil society, supported by the action taken by local and regional authorities and NGO partners. Section 8 of this report deals with this question and when the Standing Committee meets, we will have an opportunity to examine a report presented by Claude Casagrande dealing exclusively with this issue. However, while I find the approach we have adopted most satisfactory, I have to say that in terms of the structures and funding we desperately need in order to develop the network, both from the Council of Europe and the European Union, much has yet to be done, particularly if we wish to take up new challenges, such as the opening of an LDE in Mostar or in a region such as Kosovo or in the midst of our Albanian partners.

A further contribution to peace through democracy is to be found in the follow-up we give to legislative and local democracy developments in member States and countries which have applied for membership. In order to offer advice on legislative problems, we have recourse to experts and organise visits in the field where the situation is often difficult. For example, I recently went to Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania, and other colleagues have been to "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and Ukraine. We are doing our utmost to be present and to provide follow-up. Section 2 of this report gives more details of our action in this field.

I.2 *The economy at the service of democracy*

At the beginning of my term of office, under the auspices of the Congress, the first East-West Economic Forum of the Regions of Europe for sustainable development was held in Geneva. These Geneva meetings led to the setting up of the Foundation for the Economy and Sustainable Development of the Regions of Europe of which I am the Chair and whose activities are now beginning to take more practical shape. The Foundation is currently equipping itself with concrete means of action after an initial "running-in" period. Following the Geneva Economic Forum, we organised similar forums in Dortmund, Moscow and Vienna. We are now preparing for the 5th Forum to be held at the beginning

of July in Bucharest. Over these past two years, we have become aware of real needs in the field and we have made a number of contacts in order to assess these needs. We have worked hard at producing information on our activities to enable regions to develop in a context of globalisation in which our joint action can open up new avenues, and this includes developing rural areas which too often have been neglected but which are essential for the economic balance and regional planning of many of our countries.

1.3 *The environment for life*

Since the Rio summit, promoting a sustainable environment in our regions has been at the top of our list of priorities. One of the first major steps will be the adoption by the Congress at our May Session of a draft European Landscape Convention which deals with both the environmental and cultural interest of landscapes with a view to providing appropriate protection. This is the subject of a specific report to be presented at the Session and we are confident, following the consultation of our member states' governments in Florence just a few days ago, that this draft Convention will be warmly received and will be a major legal instrument in the Council's arsenal of Conventions.

There are other reports to be presented during this Session which also fit into this area. They deal with nuclear security, local and regional democracy and new prospects for regional planning policy in Greater Europe. Only by bringing the major risks under control will our environment enable life to develop to the full.

For sustainable development to be meaningful, it must be approached in a global context. This can be seen in east-west relations but it also underlies the joint effort of the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress to develop inter-regional co-operation in the Mediterranean basin and the Black Sea, which will be given practical expression in the 5th European Conference of Mediterranean Regions which we are currently preparing for late October. The regions on the southern shores of the Mediterranean must be fully part of this venture and we are determined to go down this path. I made a personal contribution by visiting Tunisia on two occasions to establish contacts with local elected representatives and the relevant ministries in order to inform them about our Mediterranean approach.

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1. The changing role of the Congress within the Council of Europe

One of the most important events for the Council of Europe, and consequently for the Congress, during the period between the two Sessions, was without a doubt the 2nd Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Strasbourg on 10 and 11 October 1997.

Given that the Congress was set up as a direct result of a fundamental decision taken by the 1st Summit in Vienna in October 1993, it is easy to understand how important it was for the Congress to participate at the 2nd Summit.

The Congress was called upon to be innovative and take up its place alongside the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly at such a major event in the life of the Council in order to demonstrate that it had indeed become the third pillar of the organisation.

We were able to make proposals for the themes dealt with in the draft Final Declaration drawn up by the Ministers' Deputies and to this end, the Bureau of the Congress had the opportunity to meet the Ministers' Deputies and, more specifically, the Group preparing for the Summit but which in fact comprised all the Deputies. This proved to be a frank exchange of views but it must be acknowledged that we were unable to put through all our proposals, in particular those concerning the draft European Charter of Regional Self-Government and the local democracy embassies. Nevertheless, the Final Declaration contained the following references:

"We, Heads of State and Governments of the member States of the Council of Europe, meeting in Strasbourg on 10-11 October 1997 for our Organisation's Second Summit,

Welcoming the achievements of the Council of Europe in preparing candidate countries for membership and ensuring their full integration into the wider European family, and underlining the contribution of the Parliamentary Assembly, as well as that of the **Congress of Local and Regional Authorities**, to supporting democratic development in member States,

... and, on this basis, declare the following:

Convinced that the promotion of human rights and the strengthening of pluralist democracy both contribute to stability in Europe:

... **acknowledge the fundamental role of the institutions of local democracy in the preservation of stability in Europe,**

... Sharing the concern of citizens about the new dimension of threats to their security and the dangers which these threats constitute for democracy:

... support the efforts of the Council of Europe and of **local, regional and national authorities** to improve the quality of life in disadvantaged areas: urban and industrialised;"

It should be noted that the reference to the role of the Congress alongside the Parliamentary Assembly meets our institutional requirements and that, in addition, the solemn confirmation of the key role played by local democracy in preserving stability in Europe is a major achievement in the campaign led by the CLRAE for recognition of the role of local authorities.

Furthermore, in response to our requests, it was pointed out that the term "local democracy" could be understood as encompassing all the activities of local and regional authorities.

I also feel it important to stress the role acknowledged to the Congress and its representatives during the Summit. For example, I was able to be present to welcome the French President and the other Heads of State and Government at the Palais de l'Europe, alongside Mrs Fischer, President of the Parliamentary Assembly and Mr Tarschys, the Secretary General.

The Congress was represented at the Summit by a delegation comprising the President and the Presidents of the two Chambers. For the first time, the President of the Congress was given the opportunity to address the Heads of State and Government and I was thus able to say what the Congress expected from the summit and above all what it saw as its role in pursuing the priority tasks of the Council.

While it was essential for the Congress to participate in the preparatory phase of the Summit and during the event itself, it was also important for the Congress to be involved in the follow-up to the Final Declaration and the Action Plan adopted by the Heads of State and Government. This phase implementing the Summit conclusions is currently under way and the Congress has an interest in this on two counts:

i. First of all, the Heads of State and Government gave **terms of reference to a Committee of Wise Persons** to study how best to strengthen the Council's action in its fields of excellence and to adapt the organisation to its new tasks and its enlarged membership. The Committee of Wise Persons has also been asked to improve the decision-making process within the organisation and the synergy between its various bodies: the Committee of Ministers and its Committees of Governmental Experts; the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe.

It was therefore essential that the Congress, and in particular its Bureau, draft a memorandum on its own requests with regard to the CLRAE's new position within the Council of Europe as a representative organ of local and regional authorities.

The Bureau drafted this memorandum on the basis of work it had commissioned from two distinguished lawyers asked to explore the problems related to the statute conferred upon the Congress by Committee of Ministers Statutory Resolution (94) 3. The experts concluded that the Congress, on the basis of the Statutory Resolution which set it up, now had within the Council of Europe its own sphere of responsibilities and high level tasks which it carried out completely independently and which were no longer subordinate to any other Council of Europe body.

The memorandum we prepared went on to highlight the achievements and aims of the Congress and its current priority role, bearing in mind the objectives set at the Vienna Summit and confirmed at the Strasbourg Summit, namely supporting the reforms instituting local democracy and, in certain countries, regionalisation.

On this basis, the Congress made a number of requests concerning improved co-ordination between the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress, and also advocated a more complete implementation of Statutory Resolution (94) 3, setting up the Congress.

Details of these requests are to be found in document CG/BUR (4) 101, adopted by the Bureau on 5 March 1998. In this report, therefore, I shall merely restate the most important points:

- The Congress asks to be more widely consulted by the Committee of Ministers in pursuance of Article 2 para 2 of the Statutory Resolution. To date this consultation has been limited exclusively to the Steering Committee on Local and Regional Authorities, whereas other work carried out by the Council of Europe also relates to the responsibilities of local and regional authorities, and in particular those of the regions represented in the Congress. The same remark applies to the Parliamentary Assembly which is also specifically mentioned in Article 2 para 2 of the Statutory Resolution.

- Consultation meetings between the Congress and the Committee of Ministers have significantly improved in recent years, especially with regard to the preparation of and follow-up to the Summit, and the preparation of the Council of Europe's 50th anniversary. Accordingly, the Congress would like meetings, whether bilateral with the Committee of Ministers or trilateral with the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, to become a more general occurrence.

- The Congress would also like to be able to play a genuine role within the Steering Committees and Specialised Ministerial Conferences to which it is invited and to see greater recognition of its status by these bodies.

- The Congress also wishes to be involved to a greater extent in the closer co-operation developing between the Council of Europe and the OSCE insofar as the latter could benefit from the competences and experience of the Congress.

- It was necessary to make a reference to funding for the Congress's activities in the memorandum, in particular with regard to wider use of the budgetary package system to enable the Congress to operate independently and a general increase in the Congress budget to enable it to carry out its new activities. In addition, with regard to daily allowances, Congress members should no longer be compared with experts but rather be treated in accordance with their actual status.

- One of the Congress's main requests is for its Secretariat to be independent and for the Congress to elect a Clerk with an enhanced position within the Council of Europe Secretariat structures.

- Although the CLRAE's internal structures do not fall within the remit of the Committee of Wise Persons, we nevertheless raised the possibility of holding a second annual Session of the Congress and its two Chambers, reviewing the working group mechanism and setting up more general committees

which could ensure more sustained Congress action and participation by all Congress members in its activities. In order to have a second Session, savings would have to be made through a more rational organisation and merging working groups.

These requests formed the hub of the meeting on 24 April 1998 between the Congress delegation (the President, Mr Chénard, first Vice-President of the Chamber of Local Authorities, and Mr Likhatchev, representative of the Chamber of Regions) and the Committee of Wise Persons.

The meeting was an opportunity first of all to highlight the political role of the Congress and the need to implement the Congress's new statute in the functioning of the Council of Europe's bodies. The Committee of Wise Persons was very receptive to the positive role played by the Congress in the field of local democracy and regionalisation in the new democracies, a role acknowledged by the governments of those countries.

The delegation then concentrated on some of the requests contained in the document submitted to the Committee of Wise Persons, in particular the consultation meetings between the Committee of Ministers, the Congress and the Assembly, consultation of the Congress by the Committee of Ministers, the holding of a second Congress Plenary Session and an independent and strengthened secretariat.

ii. **The Congress's contribution to the activities contained in the Action Plan** adopted by the Heads of State and Government is a significant means of furthering the Congress's involvement in the Council of Europe's priority activities in the coming years and ensuring that the interests of local and regional authorities are taken into account.

Here too the Bureau produced a document for the Ministers' Deputies Group responsible for following up the Summit, which provided the background for a wide-ranging and fruitful exchange of views with the Ministers' Deputies on 4 March 1998.

The appendices to this report contain a complete list of the contributions proposed by the Congress which in the main have been acknowledged by the Ministers' Deputies as being very useful. I shall mention here just a few of the points:

- the Congress's role in ensuring that the commitments entered into by member States in the field of local and regional democracy are honoured, in particular monitoring of the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government and the preparation of an ever growing number of reports on the situation of local and regional democracy in member States;
- the Congress's work in the field of the participation of minorities in local and regional government, and the activities of the local democracy embassies in certain south-east European countries, which are shortly to change their name to local democracy agencies in order to avoid any confusion;
- the unique role which local and regional authorities, and in particular towns and urban conurbations, can play in the new strategy for social cohesion which the Heads of State and Government have advocated;

- the tasks to be carried out by towns in order to ensure security for citizens, who find themselves increasingly under threat in certain neighbourhoods of our urban conurbations;
- the contribution of local and regional authorities to the enhancement of the European cultural and natural heritage and the Campaign on this issue to be launched by the Committee of Ministers;
- and last but not least, what we consider to be the vital contribution which can be made by local and regional authorities in the field of education in democratic citizenship, bearing in mind the close relationship which our towns, municipalities and regions have with their citizens.

The Congress has informed the Ministers' Deputies that it is ready to play its role to the full in implementing the Action Plan, provided, of course, that it will be given a fair slice of the additional budget to be agreed upon by the Committee of Ministers, if the latter genuinely wishes to be consistent with its decisions and ensure that its priority actions, which are for the most part new for the Council of Europe, are carried out.

2. **Political role of the Congress, in particular the drafting of country reports, monitoring of elections, follow-up to the European Charter of Local Self-Government and Congress reaction to topical questions**

Over the past year, the Congress's political role has been strengthened and more readily acknowledged by other Council of Europe organs, particularly the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly. The Congress has achieved this by increasing its level of contacts (see sections 1 and 3 of this report).

Following on from the work leading to the Conference organised by the Committee of Ministers and the Congress in Copenhagen, commemorating the 10th anniversary of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the Deputies have acknowledged the fundamental importance of local and regional democracy for the Council's values, by making this issue the subject of one of their first monitoring exercises of the honouring of commitments entered into by member States. It is too soon to make any detailed assessment of this exercise being undertaken by the Ministers' Deputies, especially as at this stage it is still by and large confidential. But the very fact that it is devoted to local democracy shows the importance which the Deputies attach to it. This, moreover, is fully in keeping with the Final Declaration adopted at the Summit.

The Congress's political role in monitoring the European Charter of Local Self-Government has also been acknowledged by the Committee of Ministers on several occasions. We are intent on continuing this work as thoroughly as possible in close co-operation with distinguished lawyers and this has led the Committee of Ministers to realise that the Congress is taking this task most seriously.

Clearly the work carried out by the Congress itself over the past few years is of immense value for these monitoring activities and forms part of the material which the Deputies have taken into account. Moreover, it can also be used, in appropriate cases, as a gauge by which to assess the information provided by the member States themselves. This is recognition of the political worth of

the Congress's activities in recent years, and the value of implementing the commitment it made in Resolution 31 (para 11) to produce regular reports on the situation of local and regional democracy in member States.

However, independently of the Committee of Ministers' exercise, the reports have an important role to play in the member States in question, since the Congress's conclusions and recommendations, often very detailed and precise, are useful for the reforms being carried out in both the older and newer Council of Europe member States.

In this connection, we already came across the example of Romania. In 1997, both Italy and Russia, for which we adopted reports, proved to be particular interesting cases. As a result of the dialogue between the Congress and the Italian Government and Parliament, a large number of Congress recommendations had clearly already been taken on board, even prior to the Recommendation adopted by the Congress in June 1997. Significantly, the President of the bicameral committee responsible for these reforms, Senator D'Onofrio, outlined the reforms under way to the Congress Standing Committee last March, as had been done by the relevant Romanian Minister before the Plenary Session in June 1997.

With regard to the Russian Federation, the Congress was well aware of the extent and complexity of the problems. Nevertheless, this report also led to a regular dialogue and Congress members have made several visits to Russia since its adoption, where they noted significant progress, which should be consolidated and pursued.

A report on Albania was adopted by the Standing Committee in March 1997 while the Albanian crisis was in full flow. The Congress never broke off its dialogue with Albanian officials; significantly, a Congress visit was made to Albania in October 1997 and in January 1998 an Albanian delegation comprising the Secretary of State, presidents of mayors' associations, presidents of districts and parliamentarians from all Albanian parties had a very fruitful discussion with the competent Congress working group. In order to establish ongoing contact, and confirm the Congress's commitment and readiness to support institutional reforms relating to local authorities, I went to Albania in May together with Mr Martini and Mr Paour, and met the Deputy Prime Minister responsible for local authorities and other members of the government, representatives of associations of local authorities, as well as the President of the Republic, whom I had already met in Strasbourg and Geneva.

In contrast, the very detailed proposals we made regarding Turkey have not, to our knowledge, been acted upon. During the year there was a change of government and recently I contacted the Turkish authorities to enquire about any follow-up which might in the meantime have been given to our approaches.

The Congress continued its series of reports on the situation of local and regional democracy with a report on Moldova and the difficult problem of Gagauzia, adopted by the Standing Committee in March, and five reports which are to be presented to the Session in May on Bulgaria, Croatia, Latvia, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

The Congress also continued with its monitoring of local and regional elections. Following the elections held in Croatia in April 1997, we observed the elections of the Regional Parliament of the Republika Srpska in Bosnia and Herzegovina (September 1997) and the municipal elections in Ukraine which were held at the same time as the parliamentary elections in March 1998.

The CLRAE also showed vigilance and perseverance in certain specific matters brought to our attention which, over the past year, concerned problems of local and regional democracy in "the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Croatia and Ukraine.

For the coming year, we are planning to draft reports on local and regional democracy on certain countries which have applied for membership of the Council and also the Netherlands and the Republic of San Marino. Even representatives from Germany (municipalities) and Finland (regions) would like their countries to be looked at. These requests are of considerable interest and show that the problem of local and regional authorities are not static and do not concern only the new democracies.

The draft European Charter of Regional Self-Government is also a major political project. The Committee of Ministers has now placed this activity in the hands of the CDLR (Steering Committee on Local and Regional Democracy). Naturally, we intend to follow this closely, including by undertaking political lobbying in our respective member States. We are also attentive to the process of regionalisation under way in Europe, in particular by organising seminars such as the recent ones in Slovakia and Slovenia, following on from the seminar already held in Poland. We shall continue this year with the Czech Republic and possibly Bulgaria. We are also conscious of the efforts at regionalisation taking place in Portugal, reflecting the commitment contained in the 1976 constitution to set up regions in mainland Portugal.

In this context, it should be pointed out that the Parliamentary Assembly has on several occasions lent us its full support for the draft European Charter of Regional Self-Government which the Congress unanimously adopted last year.

In March the Assembly presented to its Standing Committee a report on the activities of the Congress as a whole. This report also contains several interesting ideas which we shall be studying. It gives us encouragement to continue with our efforts to develop our political authority and to strengthen the Congress's regional dimension. It should also prompt us to look closely at the elected nature of Congress members, essential for its political development. In my view, greater co-operation between the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress will strengthen the democratic dimension of the Council of Europe as a whole.

This does not mean that the Committee of Ministers and the Assembly could not already enhance the political dimension of the Congress. In particular, the Assembly should make more frequent use of the possibility available to it to obtain the Congress's opinion on texts relating to the competences of local and regional authorities. It could also give greater emphasis to dialogue with the Presidency of the Congress, for example at the level of its Standing Committee or Bureau. The Committee of Ministers should seek the Congress's opinion on fields other than local authorities where it is a question of issues closely affecting the responsibilities of local and regional authorities. One example is the GMC's draft "European Code of Conduct for Public Officials". The Congress's role

could also be strengthened and further acknowledged in its contacts with certain Ministerial Conferences. Lastly, there could be more regular dialogue between the Ministers' Deputies, at appropriate levels, and the Presidency and/or secretariat of the Congress.

It goes without saying that all these approaches represent an impressive amount of work for which our secretariat does not always have adequate resources. If local and regional elected representatives devote a significant proportion of their time to these tasks, it is only fair to expect the Council of Europe to provide the necessary resources without which this work cannot successfully be completed. The Secretariat's resources should be adapted to the situation.

A table summarising the local and regional elections observed by the Congress and the specific reports adopted appears for information in the appendices.

3. Relations between the Congress and the Assembly, the Committee of Ministers and Ministerial Conferences

The quality and level of our relations with the two primary organs of the Council of Europe, the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, and with the Ministerial Conferences are a measure of the actual status of the Congress and its influence within the organisation.

As far as the Committee of Ministers is concerned, it can be said that substantial progress has been made, since we attended a bilateral meeting followed by a trilateral meeting with the Committee of Ministers, the Assembly and the Congress, on the preparation of the 50th anniversary of the Council of Europe. This was, moreover, the first meeting of the three Council organs, and this is worth stressing, even though it related to a specific subject (the 50th anniversary).

Dialogue with the Committee of Ministers was also stepped up for the preparation of the 2nd Summit of Heads of State and Government, with a meeting between our Bureau and the Ministers' Deputies. It was consolidated by a subsequent and very useful meeting on the follow-up to the second Summit, an opportunity to have a frank discussion on the Congress's contribution to the implementation of the Action Plan. This was a very important meeting as it focused on the Congress's contribution to the Council's priority activities in the coming years.

However, these new meeting opportunities did not undermine in any way the traditional links, namely the presentation of an annual report by the President of the Congress to the Ministers' Deputies. Even though this exchange of views is somewhat informal, it is nevertheless an opportunity to outline the Congress's main activities and discuss its main concerns and requests which, as stated in section I above, are now being considered by the Committee of Wise Persons.

Relations between the Congress and the Committee of Ministers were therefore stepped up as part of the preparation for the Summit and implementation of its proposals, and the commemoration of the Council's 50th anniversary. This is a gratifying development which we must build on.

As regards the Parliamentary Assembly, I have had, at regular intervals, working meetings with the President and this has led to improved co-operation between the Assembly and the Congress, especially concerning the monitoring of elections in countries where there are delicate political problems (in particular Albania and Ukraine).

As a result, the Congress and Assembly delegations to Albania co-operated perfectly and the same was true for the recent national, regional and local elections in Ukraine.

We wished to see a higher level of institutional co-operation with the Assembly going beyond co-operation with the Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities. Unfortunately, as yet our appeal has fallen on deaf ears. All the same, on an ad hoc basis, we have been invited to be represented at the meeting of the Assembly's Standing Committee, for example in connection with the report on an Assembly delegation's visit to Belgrade relating to the Kosovo crisis

We were also able to be present at the Assembly Standing Committee's discussion on the draft Recommendation and Resolution on the work of the Congress.

We would like to improve the level of our relationship with the Parliamentary Assembly, in particular through more regular participation by a Congress representative at the meetings of the Standing Committee and an invitation for the President of the Congress or one of his representatives to address the Assembly Session at least once during his or her two year term of office.

This is the objective we still have to achieve, although I must here stress the excellent working relationship we have with the Assembly's Committee on the Environment, Regional Planning and Local Authorities, which has enabled us to press ahead with major projects such as the European Charter of Mountain Regions.

With regard to Ministerial Conferences, our aim is to improve Congress participation in such conferences, in application of the Statutory Resolution setting up the Congress.

While the CLRAE plays a visible role in the Conferences of Ministers responsible for local and regional authorities, in particular through the organisation of a colloquy held on a basis of parity, further improvements have to be made as regards our participation in other Ministerial Conferences where, at present, our role is merely that of observer.

Following the last European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT) held in Cyprus in 1997 there were complaints from representatives of both the Congress and the Parliamentary Assembly. A working meeting on this question was held, chaired by the new Deputy Secretary General, Mr Krüger, and we now hope that relations with CEMAT and the two elected organs of the Council of Europe will improve significantly in time for the next Ministerial Conference scheduled for Hanover in 2000.

It has been decided that next year a special conference will be held enabling elected representatives – both parliamentarians and local and regional councillors – to discuss the preparation of the next CEMAT on an equal footing. This is particularly important since in several European countries today responsibilities for regional planning fall to the regional rather than the central authorities.

However, in addition to these two conferences, in which the Congress has a more obvious interest, the CLRAE would like to improve the level of its participation in other Ministerial Conferences. This question was raised during the dialogue with the Committee of Ministers.

Generally speaking, the dialogue and co-operation between the three political organs of the Council of Europe has improved over the last two years, but more could be done and this we hope will be the result of our discussion with the Committee of Wise Persons.

There is a need for productive co-operation between the Council's three political organs; it is a prerequisite if the Council's action is to become more effective.

4. **Follow up to adopted texts**

In this section I will present the replies from the Committee of Ministers to the Recommendations adopted by the Congress.

Since the last Session where a number of Recommendations were adopted, the Committee of Ministers has already given replies to six of them: Recommendations 28, 29, 30, 31, 32 and 35¹. Furthermore, in the period between the two Sessions the Ministers' Deputies have continued to reply to the texts previously adopted by the Congress.

First of all, I would like to draw Congress members' attention to the replies given by the Committee of Ministers to the Recommendations on the situation of local and regional democracy in member States: primarily these concern the situation of local democracy in Romania, Albania, Turkey, Italy and Russia. The information contained in these reports assists the Congress in monitoring the commitments in the field of local and regional democracy entered into by member States upon accession to the Council of Europe.

¹ *Recommendation 28 (1997) on the state of local and regional democracy in Albania*
Recommendation 29 (1997) on the state of local and regional democracy in Turkey
Recommendation 30 (1997) on the state of local self-government and federalism in Russia
Recommendation 31 (1997) on the preliminary draft European Landscape Convention
Recommendation 32 (1997) on the contribution of the CLRAE to the 2nd Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe member States
Recommendation 35 (1997) on the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Italy

With regard to Albania, which is undergoing a delicate period of transition to a genuinely democratic political regime, the Committee of Ministers welcomed the talks held by the President of the Congress with Mr Meidani, President of Albania, in the margins of the 2nd Summit and the invitation sent by the Albanian authorities to the CLRAE President to visit the country. The Committee of Ministers will also bear in mind the priorities identified during the talks between the two Presidents.

As regards the Congress Recommendations on local democracy in Turkey, Russia and Italy (29, 31 and 35 (1997)¹), the Committee of Ministers congratulated the Congress on its commitment to see that legislation and practice in the field of local and regional democracy were consistent with the provisions of the European Charter of Local Self-Government. Taking note of these Recommendations, the Deputies decided to bear them in mind for the purpose of monitoring the commitments in the field of local democracy entered into by member States. They also welcomed the dialogue initiated with the governments of these countries.

I would also like to mention here two particularly satisfying replies by the Committee of Ministers to Congress Recommendations:

- First, the reply to the preliminary draft European Landscape Convention in which it asked its Rapporteur Group on Environment and Local Authorities to study the text. We hope therefore that the ground will be well prepared so that the adoption of the final version of our Recommendation will ultimately lead to the text becoming one of the Council's Conventions, in keeping with the wishes of both the Congress and the Parliamentary Assembly.

- Second, in their reply to our contribution to the 2nd Summit, the Committee of Ministers refers to the terms of reference of the Committee of Wise Persons. We are now pleased to have been able to hold a dialogue with this Committee and we hope that the proposals we have made and to which the Committee referred in its first report, for subsequent consideration, will at least in part be accepted by the Committee of Wise Persons. This is developed further in the first section of this report and in Appendix III.

¹ *Recommendation 29 (1997) on the state of local and regional democracy in Turkey*
Recommendation 31 (1997) on the preliminary draft European Landscape Convention
Recommendation 35 (1997) on the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government

As I have already mentioned above, the Committee of Ministers continued throughout this period to reply to Congress Recommendations adopted prior to the 4th CLRAE Session (Recommendations 13, 14, 17, 18, 21, 23, 25 and 27¹). This provided the Committee of Ministers with the opportunity to state its position on new possibilities of North/South co-operation for national associations of local and regional authorities. It acknowledged that the Conferences of Mediterranean Regions organised regularly by the CLRAE in conjunction with the Parliamentary Assembly were an excellent means of disseminating the values of the Council of Europe to local and regional elected representatives and the population as a whole and to further Mediterranean co-operation, in particular in the field of the environment. With regard to social and economic East-West co-operation policies, the Deputies shared the opinions of the Congress expressed in Recommendations 23, 25 and 27 (1996)¹.

All in all during the period between May 1997 and May 1998 the Committee of Ministers replied to 14 CLRAE Recommendations, five of which had been adopted at the 4th Session of the Congress and nine adopted at previous Sessions or meetings of the Standing Committee. It also adopted five interim replies to five Recommendations adopted by the CLRAE at the 4th Session (Recommendations 33, 34, 35, 36 and 37²). It is apparent that the Deputies are prepared to consider the texts proposed by the Congress within a useful time frame and give their replies quickly.

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- ¹ *Recommendation 13 (1995)* on new opportunities for national associations of local and regional authorities in North/South co-operation
Recommendation 14 (1995) on the European Charter of Mountain Regions
Recommendation 17 (1996) on responsibilities and initiatives of cities in respect of education
Recommendation 18 (1996) on guiding principles for the action of the Congress when preparing reports on local and regional democracy in member States and applicant States
Recommendation 21 (1996) on the 4th Conference on Mediterranean Regions
Recommendation 23 (1996) on the First East/West Economic Forum of the Regions of Europe
Recommendation 25 (1996) on "Unemployment/employment: new activities and occupations"
Recommendation 27 (1996) on the 2nd Economic Forum of the Regions of Europe
- ² *Recommendation 33 (1997)* on the local democracy embassies: instruments for peace and democracy in Europe
Recommendation 34 (1997) on the draft European Charter of Regional Self-Government
Recommendation 35 (1997) on the implementation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government in Italy
Recommendation 36 (1997) on crime and urban insecurity in Europe
Recommendation 37 (1997) on the 3rd Economic Forum of the Regions of Europe for economic co-operation, security and sustainable development

5. Implementation and ratification of Conventions in the field of local and regional authorities

Among the Conventions which have resulted from the work of the Congress or its predecessor, pride of place must be given to the European Charter of Local Self-Government. This text today is but 13 years old, making it a relatively young legal instrument among the Council's basic Conventions. We are particularly gratified to see that it has today become a fundamental and essential part of our organisation's value system.

Both the Parliamentary Assembly and the Committee of Ministers now include this among the texts which countries applying for membership must undertake to sign and ratify within a short time. An excellent example in this respect is the Russian Federation which signed the Charter at the very time it acceded to the Council of Europe and it is now in the process of ratifying it. We are also pleased to see that Croatia has signed and ratified the Charter (as it had undertaken to do) last November and we hope that the commitments thus entered into will soon be put into practice, even though it is perhaps regrettable that when Croatia ratified the Charter, it did not accept a substantial number of the basic provisions.

The United Kingdom which signed the Charter at our last Session is now in the final stage of the ratification process. In this instance, we are happy to see that the UK has accepted all the provisions in the Charter, clearly demonstrating its confidence in the functioning of local democracy.

With regard to countries which have applied for membership of the Council, we are aware that Bosnia and Herzegovina has already approved, in principle, the European Charter of Local Self-Government and we are in regular contact with this country which I visited in December last year, with a view to developing local democracy, including through the efforts made by the local democracy embassies and the LODE programme. We therefore believe that this country will ratify the Charter fairly quickly after joining the Council. As far as the other prospective members are concerned, we shall soon have to examine the situation in Armenia in more detail. Our recent contacts with Azerbaijan and Georgia lead us to believe that in both countries serious efforts to democratise local authorities will be made in the near future. We shall therefore pursue our contacts in order to encourage the signature and then the ratification of the Charter when these countries accede to the Council of Europe.

Turning to the oldest of our Conventions, the Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation, last March following a proposal made by the Congress, the Committee of Ministers adopted Protocol No. 2 relating to inter-territorial co-operation between municipalities and regions having no common border. This is a major step forward and we hope that many countries will sign and ratify this text which was opened for signature on 5 May 1998.

We also welcome the fact that Turkey recently signed the Outline Convention, following a colloquy organised in the province of the Chair of the Turkish delegation to the Congress at the initiative of the Committee of Wise Persons responsible for promoting transfrontier co-operation on which the Congress is represented by Mr Olbrycht (Poland). This very dynamic group also intends to promote transfrontier co-operation in other regions where there are difficulties such as between Romania and Bulgaria or Albania and Greece, not to mention Russia and Estonia. It goes without saying that

we are offering our full support to these efforts, in particular by organising the next Conference of European Transfrontier Regions scheduled to be held in early 1999 in Timisoara in a region of the country adjacent to Hungary and Voivodina (Serbia/Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) where, much to our delight, a transfrontier co-operation agreement has been signed between these three countries.

We can also derive much satisfaction from the fact that the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, in which the Congress invested considerable effort, at last entered into force on 1 March 1998. It has now been ratified by 7 countries. The Congress also intends to follow closely the work which will be now carried out by the Committee of Experts provided for by the Convention which will be required to examine the national reports submitted by countries which have ratified the text.

Lastly, it should be remembered that the European Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level entered into force on 1 May last year. This is also a source of satisfaction for us and we hope to be able to carry out work in the near future to further develop what has already been achieved as a result of the Convention, in particular the consultative councils of foreigners which have been formed in numerous municipalities.

I would not like to close this section without mentioning the draft Conventions we have initiated: first and foremost the European Charter of Regional Self-Government. We are pleased that the Committee of Ministers has at last given the CDLR terms of reference to move ahead in this direction, even though the wording of the terms of reference is rather restrictive and could raise a number of problems. The Congress, with the backing of the Parliamentary Assembly, intends to do whatever it can to promote this text.

At this year's Session, we are going to propose to the Committee of Ministers a draft European Landscape Convention. At a recent hearing we organised in Florence with government representatives we took a major step forward towards acceptance of this text proposed by the Congress. It comes at a time when environmental protection is quite justifiably becoming a growing concern of our fellow citizens. Apart from the environmental value it represents, the draft is also intended to show our concern for landscapes as part of our natural heritage, even though they are frequently shaped by human hands.

A third draft proposed by the Congress and the Parliamentary Assembly also deserves our attention: the European Charter of Mountain Regions. We hope that, following numerous diversions, the text may now move forward and be adopted by the Committee of Ministers and opened for signature by member States. As I come from a region at the foot of the highest mountains in Europe and Mont Blanc, I know from first-hand experience of the need to preserve these very particular areas and to authorise development there only with the utmost prudence and discernment.

6. Conferences and symposia

More than ever before, this period between Sessions has been extremely rich in colloquies, conferences, hearings and symposia organised by the Congress. In all there have been 15 such events.

I was not able to attend all of these meetings, and for many of them I was of course obliged to send a representative on my behalf.

During this Session you will be asked to look at the conclusions of a number of these conferences and colloquies, in particular the Colloquy on Nuclear Security and Local and Regional Democracy (24-26 June 1997, Gothenburg.), the Conference on Mediterranean Migration and Local and Regional Authorities (Bari, 2-3 October 1997), the Colloquy on Employment and New Initiatives for Youth Employment (Naples, 12-13 March 1998) and the Intergovernmental Consultation Conference on the preliminary draft European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2-4 April 1998).

Other conferences closed a series inaugurated by the Congress; here I am referring in particular to the Hearing on Provisions for Roma in Municipalities (Pardubice, 23-24 October 1997) and the International Conference on Policies for Deprived Children/Adolescents and Families (St. Petersburg, 2-4 April 1998).

Yet others are part of a continuing series such as the 4th Economic Forum of the Regions of Europe (Vienna, 9-11 September 1997), the ENTO Seminar and General Assembly (also Vienna, 13-14 October 1997) and the Seminar on Local Authorities and Co-operation with the Police (Newcastle, UK, 29 April – 1 May 1998). The Congress will undoubtedly be asked to look at the reports of these conferences when they come to an end. The same will be true for the Colloquy on the Information Society and Local and Regional Authorities (21-23 January 1998, Helsinki).

In addition, the Chamber of Regions continued its policy of hearings on the regionalisation process in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe and held two meetings on this theme, on 27 October 1997 in Maribor (Slovenia) and 13 February 1998 in Bratislava (Slovakia).

Insofar as the Congress has decided to devote a significant part of its 6th Session in 1999 to youth problems, there will be a report on the conclusions of the conference on this subject held in Budapest on 23-25 October 1997.

Lastly, the Congress has begun looking at a new theme on the ombudsman at local and regional levels with a conference held in Messina (Italy) on 13-15 November 1997 which is due to be followed by a second conference in a Central or East European country.

It will be seen therefore that in the period between the two Sessions, the Congress has organised an even greater number of colloquies, conferences and hearings, enabling it to involve a large number of towns, regions and governmental and non-governmental organisations in its work and the drafting of its reports.

7. Setting up and disbanding working groups

As you will be aware, the Congress is organised on the basis of working groups which are given the task of drafting the various reports and preparing for colloquies and ad hoc conferences or, in certain cases, monitoring a specific project.

Ever since the Congress was founded, four years ago, this system of working groups, each one limited to a maximum of 11 members, has caused us certain problems in that it is much easier to decide to set up a working group than to disband one. As a result, over the years the number of groups has increased and the length of their activities extended.

Further, the groups generally deal with a specific topic and are not suited to discussing a broad theme. Which is why two twin groups from the two Chambers had been set up, on an experimental basis, for environmental protection and sustainable development and for culture, education and the media.

In addition to these two twin groups, the Congress has set up 14 joint groups and five groups for each Chamber, making a grand total of 26 groups – a large number which is not easy for the Bureau or the Secretariat to manage. This is why it has been decided that one of the Bureau's objectives will be to review the working group structure and to replace them, at least in part, by committees covering broad sectors of interest. This does not mean that we would not retain a limited number of working groups to look at very specific topics, such as the drawing up of a draft Convention, managing local democracy embassies, etc.

Nevertheless, such a reform will only be possible by revising the Congress Charter, scheduled for January 2000.

In the meantime, we have to manage the working group system. Consequently, five groups have been set up during the period between the Sessions: “Euro-Med” Co-operation on Local Democracy; Local and Regional Information Society; the working group responsible for preparing the 7th European Conference of Border Regions; Responsibilities of Local and Regional Authorities in the Social Services Field; and the Working Group responsible for drafting a report on Mediterranean migration.

At the same time, the following six working groups have been disbanded: twinnings and partnerships; the group responsible for drafting a report on the situation of local democracy in Italy; the group looking at provisions for Roma in municipalities; the group responsible for drafting a report on the situation of local and regional democracy in Turkey; the group responsible for drafting a report on the situation of local and regional democracy in the Russian Federation; and the North-South group.

8. Progress with regard to LDEs

In recent months there have been difficult but nonetheless positive developments with the LDE programme. In accordance with the decisions adopted by the CLRAE at its Plenary Session, discussions on the programme structures have begun. The Working Group has consulted a variety of quarters to gain an awareness of the positions of the partner towns and regions and the delegates, responsible for the implementation of the project on the ground. For its part, the Committee of Ministers has begun discussing the Congress's proposals aimed at setting up a foundation which will clarify the legal links between the various parties involved in the programme. In addition, a system has been put in place allowing for more autonomous management of the financial aid allocated by the Congress to the activities and operation of the local democracy embassies.

We must also welcome the prospects for opening a local democracy embassy in the ravaged town of Mostar (Bosnia and Herzegovina) which could provide a useful contribution to the process of reconstructing the town in conjunction with all the local and regional players.

The local democracy embassies have developed innovative working methods to promote local democracy and inter-community dialogue. In this way they are taking a part in the implementation of the Action Plan adopted at the last Council of Europe Summit. They provide a practical contribution to the process of integrating their host countries into Europe and achieving regional stability. Nevertheless, the Congress must remain open to the needs expressed by the local and regional authorities which wish to encourage the development of democratic practices elsewhere in Europe, and respond today to new expectations or demands, be this in Kosovo, Albania or Ukraine. Obviously, this will require additional funding and an appropriate working structure.

All the same, we have to express our criticism at the lack of genuine resources. Words are all very well but we also need money. These embassies are instruments of peace, admittedly modest in scope but nonetheless very effective.

9. Relations with countries which have applied for membership of the Council of Europe

Two of the countries which have applied for membership have special guest status with the Congress. These are Bosnia and Herzegovina and Armenia.

We have had very sustained contacts with Bosnia and Herzegovina as a result of the activities of the local democracy embassies which have opened and operate in Tuzla, Sarajevo and Zavidovici. I had the opportunity to visit each of these embassies and make a number of contacts. Furthermore, the Congress took part in the observation first of all of the cantonal elections and then the municipal elections organised by the OSCE. However, one of the most significant contacts was made at a meeting organised in the margins of the Summit with Mr Zubak, member of the presidency of the country, concerning possible Congress co-operation with introducing reform of municipal boundaries. Following this initial contact, I carried out an official visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina in late 1997 when I had the opportunity to speak once again with the Co-President, Mr Zubak, and with the Vice-President of the Bosnia-Croatian Federation Mr Ganic, and the Federation Minister responsible for regional planning. I was also able to hold discussions with Mr Westendorp, Special Representative for Bosnia and Herzegovina and OSCE representatives in Sarajevo. Following these talks, we were invited

to take part this year in a joint working group to be set up in the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina to study the introduction of a radical reform of municipal boundaries the aim of which is to create smaller municipalities than those inherited from the former Yugoslavia. I indicated the Congress's agreement to take part in such a group and we are now waiting for the arrangements to be made by the authorities of the Federation to enable the group to begin work. I would also like to point out that through the Committee on local democracy embassies we have once again turned our attention to the project to open an LDE in Mostar, a town which is particularly symbolic for co-operation between Croats and Bosnians. Two working visits have already been made to Mostar and the setting up of this new LDE is on track. We must also organise as soon as possible a visit by the CLRAE President to the Republika Srpska in order to develop our contacts with this entity.

Armenia, following the local elections in spring 1997, has obtained special guest status with the Congress and the CLRAE must now step up its contacts with this country which is still actively setting up its democratic structures.

Congress contacts with the other Caucasian countries have also been developed over the last year.

As regards Georgia, the Congress took part in a conference on local democracy in July 1997 and in a visit in late 1997 to give an opinion on the law on local self-government there. This law has just been passed, but unfortunately the problem of electing town mayors has not yet been settled satisfactorily. We are awaiting the holding of local elections in Georgia before the end of 1998 and it goes without saying that the Congress will be present with a delegation of observers. We will be able to consider granting Georgia special guest status only if this delegation is able to draft a positive report. In addition, I met the representatives we had invited to the 4th Plenary Session and a delegation of Georgian parliamentarians who visited me in Strasbourg, late January, during the Parliamentary Assembly part-Session.

Contacts with Azerbaijan also stepped up a gear as a result of the working meeting I held with the Azerbaijani delegation in the margins of the last Plenary Session. In July 1997, a Congress delegation attended a conference on local democracy held in Baku as part of the LODE programme. The law on local government is currently in preparation and the first local elections are expected to be held in spring 1999. Progress made in this country augurs well for the process of democratisation which should lead to our granting special guest status once a delegation of Congress observers has been able to monitor the first democratic local elections.

With regard to Belarus, it will be remembered that the Congress had already sent a delegation in 1996 prior to the referendum which the current President pushed through, leading to a major halt in the process of democratisation. This is why the Bureau of the Congress has not as yet felt there was much point in sending further delegations to Belarus. It has merely invited representatives of the Foundation for Local Democracy in Belarus to attend the Sessions as observers. Nevertheless, at a meeting I attended in March 1998 organised by the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of the Commonwealth of Independent States in St. Petersburg, I was able to make a number of useful contacts with parliamentary representatives from Belarus and I concluded from these that it would probably be

worthwhile re-establishing contacts with these representatives who are attempting to build democracy and in particular local democracy in the country. If the Bureau agrees, I shall be happy to place myself at the disposal of the Congress to follow up these contacts.

As for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) we renewed contacts at the last Plenary Session to which the former Standing Conference of Towns and Local Authorities of the FRY had been invited, along with the new Association for Local Democracy, founded by the opposition mayors elected at the last municipal elections in spring 97. We also exchanged letters with the secretariat of this new association concerning a draft law on local self-government which it had drawn up. We had wished to visit these associations in Belgrade and the local democracy embassy in Subotica but unfortunately, the consular authorities of the FRY did not grant us the requisite visas for such a visit. Subsequently, the Congress was informed by the mayor of Novi Pazar in Sanjak, a predominantly Muslim region, of the dismissal of the executive and the municipal council in that town, and a number of incidents promoted by the use of police force. A delegation from Novi Pazar and Sanjak was received by the Bureau in Vienna in September 1997 and a press release issued.

The other event causing the Bureau to focus attention on the FRY is more recent and concerns the Kosovo crisis and intervention by the police forces of the Belgrade regime against the villages and political representatives of the Albanian community in this region. Both the Bureau and the Standing Committee have strongly condemned the Serbian Government's policy and we have lent our support, although we were unable to participate ourselves, to the delegation sent by the Parliamentary Assembly to Belgrade. We have indicated our readiness to help find a solution which must re-establish the autonomous status of this province, but for the time being the Belgrade Government has rejected any Council of Europe mediation on the grounds that the FRY has not yet been allowed to become a member of our organisation. Kosovo remains a major issue for the Council and the Congress and we must turn once again to our plan to open a local democracy embassy in the province as soon as possible.

CONCLUSION

The Council of Europe as a whole and the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe have clearly extended the scope of their action, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe. Despite the shortcomings of which we are fully aware, there can be no doubt about the useful role played by the Council in offering guidance to the new democracies, often in a long and difficult transition process, helping them to develop confidently and in a climate of regular dialogue and exchanges with their partners throughout Europe. Nature abhors a vacuum and we should realise that if we do not have the necessary resources to use in situ all the expertise we have in the Council of Europe there is a danger that this place will be taken by others, often with less experience in matters such as local democracy which is one of our specialist fields.

It is absolutely essential that our governments be consistent. If they want the Council to encourage developments in this field, they must provide us with adequate resources. If not, other organisations, such as the OSCE, instead of co-operating with the Council of Europe and the Congress will take their place in large numbers. Consequently, there is a danger that the European dimension will be compromised.

These are issues and challenges which go beyond our own Congress. Can we, indeed do we want, to give the Council of Europe the means to develop the principles which have been patiently developed over the last 50 years? We must seek the answer to this question in the work of the Committee of Wise Persons and in any follow-up to their work decided upon by the Committee of Ministers. Personally, I am convinced that the Congress is keen to make its own contribution in our particular fields so that it will be possible to develop democracy for peace, the economy at the service of democracy and the environment for life.

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APPENDIX I

LIST OF CONGRESS ACTIVITIES

- 1. Texts adopted at the Standing Committee meetings in March and November 1997 and March 1998**
 - Recommendation 36 (1997) and Resolution 57 (1997) on crime and urban insecurity in Europe
 - Recommendation 37 (1997) on the Third Economic Forum of the Regions of Europe for Economic Co-operation, Security and Sustainable Development
 - Recommendation 38 (1998) and Resolution 59 (1998) on the Situation of Local and Regional Self-Government in the Republic of Moldova
 - Recommendation 39 (1998) on the incorporation of the European Charter of Local Self-Government into the Legal Systems of ratifying countries and on the legal protection of Local Self-Government
 - Resolution 58 (1997) on the situation of local democracy in member countries
 - Opinion 7 (1997) on draft Protocol No. 2 to the European Outline Convention on transfrontier co-operation between territorial communities or authorities concerning interterritorial co-operation.
 - Decision on the Situation in Kosovo (6 March 1998)
- 2. Conferences and symposia held during the inter-Session (June 1997 - May 1998)**
 - 21-23 January 1998 in Helsinki (Finland)
Colloquy on Information Society and Local and Regional Authorities
 - 13-14 February in Bratislava (Slovakia)
Colloquy on the Regionalisation Process in Slovakia
 - 16-17 February in Opatija (Croatia)
Hearing on Environmental Problems and Sustainable Development in the Adriatic Sea
 - 12-13 March in Naples (Italy)
Colloquy on Employment - "New Initiatives on Youth employment"
 - 2-4 April in Florence (Italy)
Intergovernmental Consultation Conference on the preliminary draft European Landscape Convention

- 2-4 April in St Petersburg (Russian Federation)
International Conference on Policies for Deprived Children/Adolescents and Families
- 29 April - 1 May in Newcastle (United Kingdom)
International Seminar on "Tackling Crime and Urban Insecurity in Europe through Co-operation between Local Authorities and Police"

APPENDIX II

SUMMARY OF FOLLOW-UP TO THE SUMMIT

I. THE SUMMIT AND THE FINAL DECLARATION FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THE CLRAE

Although the Second Summit of Heads of State and Government did not deal directly with subjects concerning local and regional authorities, there is one fact which emerges from the speeches given at the Summit and from the Final Declaration: particular attention is paid by the member States to the role of the CLRAE within the Council of Europe and its contribution to the implementation of the Action Plan adopted at the Summit.

To sum up, the following points raised in the speeches of Heads of State and Government should be emphasised:

- i. a call for broader state decentralisation or devolution of state powers to local level;
- ii. application of the principle of subsidiarity;
- iii. monitoring of commitments made by the member States, a process in which the Congress is called upon to play a major role.

As far as the Final Declaration is concerned, the text clearly highlights the role and the tasks with which the CLRAE is to be entrusted.

2. THE ACTION PLAN OF THE SUMMIT FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THE CLRAE

2.1 Local democracy and stability in Europe

Via its specialised bodies, the CLRAE contributes to these issues directly through:

- i. its participation in **standard setting** (since the Congress was behind several European Conventions on this subject) and the **fundamental principles** of local democracy (eg emphasis on the principle of subsidiarity);
- ii. its active involvement in the implementation and strengthening of the **European Charter of Local Self-Government**;
- iii. its contribution to **the dissemination of the principles of the Charter** and **the training of local government staff**;

iv. **monitoring and assisting with the implementation of the Charter** by States:

- . **on-the-spot visits** aimed at evaluating progress in local and regional democracy (eg: in "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", Croatia, Albania, Bulgaria, etc)
- . **drafting general or specific reports** (country-by-country) or assessments of the situation of local and regional democracy (eg in Romania, Turkey, Croatia, Moldova and Albania)
- . **examination of applications** or complaints by local and regional authorities and their representative associations
- . **technical assistance** to the new democracies with a view to introducing legislation consistent with the Charter;

v. **its Committee on local democracy embassies;**

vi. **its Working Group on Multi-Party Local and Regional Democracy;**

vii. **the preparation of the Council of Europe's 50th anniversary;**

viii. **the draft European Charter of Regional Self-Government**, now submitted to the Committee of Ministers.

3. **THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE CONGRESS TO THE ACTION PLAN**

3.1 **Democracy and human rights**

3.1.1 **Commissioner for Human Rights**

The Messina Conference (13-15 November 1997) on "Making the Protection Rights More Accessible to Citizens: the Ombudsman at the Local and Regional Level" set out to analyse the activities of **ombudsmen at local and regional levels**, where they exist; their relations with national ombudsmen, and the extension of these ways of protecting citizens' rights to local authorities which, as yet, do not have them at their disposal.

3.1.2 **Compliance with member States' commitments**

Anxious to play a part in the new political developments stemming from the admission of many new member States after the fall of the Berlin Wall, **the CLRAE has undertaken to focus particular attention on the honouring of commitments made in the area of local and regional democracy**, while offering the new member States, especially the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe, the **practical assistance** that they vitally need. The work done so far is already a practical contribution with respect to this item in the Action Plan, especially since the Committee of Ministers chose local democracy as the second subject of inquiry for the purpose of monitoring the honouring of commitments made by the member States of the Council of Europe.

The CLRAE has set up a number of Working Groups dealing specifically with this field, which are responsible for **monitoring the application of the European Charter of Local Self-Government** and preparing **reports on the state of local democracy in the member States**.

The CLRAE will also be ready to support countries to comply with the requirements of the **European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages** (entry into force in early 1998) and the **Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities** (entry into force in February 1998), as well as the **European Charter of Regional Self-Government**, if it is adopted by the Committee of Ministers.

3.1.3 Combating racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance

The CLRAE participated in the fight against racism, xenophobia, anti-Semitism and intolerance by contributing to the Campaign and, in the past, through the **European Convention on the Participation of Foreigners in Public Life at Local Level** (special mention might be made of the setting up of consultative bodies to represent foreign residents in certain towns and cities).

Among the current activities in this field, mention might be made of:

- the preparation of the **Congress of Cities of Asylum** (1998),
- local democracy embassy programmes;
- the management and development of the **Network of Provisions for Roma in Municipalities**.

3.1.4 Protection of national minorities

The CLRAE sets considerable store by the protection of national minorities, an issue which has gradually become a problem of democracy and human rights, and therefore of equal interest to states, local and regional authorities and Europe as a whole.

For this reason, the Working Group on **Federalism, Regionalism, Local Autonomy and Minorities** has been entrusted with drawing up a Recommendation which will be submitted by the Congress to the Committee of Ministers after the 5th Plenary Session.

The activities of the local democracy embassies (in the countries of the former Yugoslavia), carried out under the auspices of a committee specially set up by the Congress, have also helped to facilitate the co-existence of different cultural communities and of minority and majority groups. This is an example of a practical initiative aimed at helping to build confidence in a geopolitical area where minorities are a burning issue.

3.2 Social cohesion

3.2.1 New strategy for social cohesion

The CLRAE has already given **thought to the role to be played by local authorities in the area of social cohesion**. The Working Group on Employment and Economic and Social Development of Regions was set up to consider the opportunities for the economic and social development of European regions and the avenues to be explored in that connection, particularly as **regards job creation**.

Through its current activities such as the **Colloquy held in Naples in March 1998 on "New Initiatives for Youth Employment"**, the CLRAE directly contributes to the definition of a "new strategy for social cohesion". **There are also plans to present a report on social cohesion in towns and cities in 1998.**

The Chamber of Regions is also undertaking a set of actions designed to help strengthen social and economic solidarity between European regions. In this way it intends to foster **East-West economic exchanges between regions and encourage understanding and co-operation between the citizens of the North and the South**, one of the aims set by the Heads of State and Government and included in the Final Declaration of the Summit.

Recently, following the proposal of CLRAE delegates from Eastern and Western European countries, a **Working Group on Responsibilities of Local and Regional Authorities in the Social Services Field** has been set up.

3.2.2 Programme for children

The CLRAE's activities relating to the protection of children's interests include **solidarity action for Albanian schools, undertaken in the past by the Congress, and an international Conference on Policies for Deprived Children/Adolescents and Families (St Petersburg, April 1998).**

3.2.3 Social Development Fund

The Working Group on Employment and the Economic and Social Development of Regions is considering, particularly in the framework of the Naples colloquy, the possibilities for **co-operation with the Fund** in terms of exchange of information and, in particular, financing. The CLRAE proposes in general to co-operate more closely with the Social Development Fund in the framework of its activities designed to consolidate social cohesion in Europe. It would also like the **Social Development Fund to focus more on projects proposed by the regions.**

3.3 Security of citizens

3.3.1 **Fighting corruption and organised crime**

In order to react to rising crime in the wake of the major political, social and economic changes which have taken place in recent years in Europe, the Congress organised a **Conference on the subject in Erfurt** in February 1997. Study of the causes and the search for solutions at local and regional level will continue in the framework of **specialised seminars**: on co-operation between local authorities and the police (Northumbria, April/May 1998); on the links between the urban environment and crime (Szczecin, 1999); and transfrontier co-operation for crime prevention (the Netherlands, 1999, to be confirmed). A **third conference to take stock of the response by local authorities to crime is planned for 1999, in Russia.**

The CLRAE is currently contributing to the **implementation of the Secretary General's "new initiative"** to reduce crime through actions aimed at mobilising the municipal authorities of the towns and cities chosen for the pilot project (in Russia, Ukraine and Moldova) and the identification of experts.

In addition, the CLRAE Working Group on Crime and Urban Insecurity intends to draw up a handbook on the prevention of crime in urban areas. This book will aim to inform municipalities on experiences which exist in the field of preventative policies.

The Congress has given a new direction to its work by looking at the **political integrity of members of local and regional authorities** and possible ways of reducing the risk of corruption.

In the wake of the Summit, the CLRAE contribution to stepping up the Council of Europe's activities related to the fight against crime will entail

- **improving the mobilisation of local authorities**
- **strengthening the exchange of experience between local authorities**
- **supporting the strategies adopted by local authorities to prevent crime**
- **developing the local dimension in the field of intergovernmental co-operation and following up the Ministerial Conferences dealing with this subject.**

The Congress therefore intends to take appropriate measures to **apply the principles of the European Urban Charter** and foster co-operation between European towns and cities. The actual status of towns and cities and their relationships with other tiers of local and regional government in Central and Eastern Europe will be the subject of a **Conference due to take place in Russia in 1998**. The year 2001 has been earmarked for an activity to raise public awareness about towns and cities: **"The Year 2001 - Springtime of Towns"**.

The Secretary General of the Council of Europe stresses, moreover, that the Committee of Ministers should step up its support for the CLRAE, which is in keeping with the wish expressed by the Congress. It should be remembered that the issue of democratic security in towns and cities was taken up by the Congress before the Summit, which recognised the need for a genuine Council of Europe policy in this field.

4. DEMOCRATIC VALUES AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

4.1 Education for democratic citizenship

This is a field in which the Congress has a special interest and local elected representatives throughout Europe would like all of their fellow citizens to become aware of their rights and responsibilities.

The Secretary General of the Council of Europe cites the activities and projects of the CLRAE among the achievements to be taken into account when launching the initiative for democratic citizenship, outlined in the Action Plan. Special mention is made of the **draft Charter of Citizens' Rights and Responsibilities at Local Level**, currently being prepared by a Working Group of the Congress, to be submitted to the Congress or the Standing Committee for adoption in 1999.

The CLRAE also proposes to organise a number of **seminars related to education in the principles of local and regional democracy and to the management of public affairs**. These seminars will be addressed especially to the local and regional elected representatives of Central and Eastern Europe.

The CLRAE also recommends European co-operation in this field, through exchanges of experience organised by the Congress, courses, visits and training programmes designed for associations of local authorities in Central and Eastern European countries (to identify and develop the practical skills needed for running public affairs), in particular in the framework of the **European Network of Training Organisations for Local and Regional Authorities (ENTO)**.

The Congress also feels that **young people should be more involved in the running of local and regional authorities** (Conclusions of the Budapest Conference, held on 23-25 October 1997, on Young People and their Towns: What Involvement? Comparing Policies).

In the regions, young people should take an active part in creating a genuine regional identity (the Congress might tackle the **issue of the creation and promotion of regional identity**).

The Working Group on Youth is **assessing the implementation of the European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Regional and Local Life**, and preparing a 3rd European Conference on local and regional youth policy.

In order to promote youth mobility in Europe, planned for 1999/2000 as part of the Campaign on "Europe - a Common Heritage", thought should be given to appropriate action in connection with the **policy of multilingualism** recommended by the Congress in several of its texts.

Here mention should also be made of the **activities of the local democracy embassies**, which aim precisely to contribute to the development of democratic citizenship in the towns and cities of former Yugoslavia.

4.2 Enhancement of the European heritage

The CLRAE's current contribution might be illustrated by the **draft European Landscape Convention**, in which landscape is viewed as a common heritage, at the interface between nature and culture. This project is mentioned by the Secretary General of the Council as a Congress activity that ties in with this approach.

The CLRAE might **propose that the campaign in 1999/2000 on "Europe - a Common Heritage" include a major landscape element** (contact has already been made on this subject with the Directorate of Education, Culture and Sport, in particular the Cultural Heritage Division).

In order to integrate modern technologies into its own activities and use them to enhance the common heritage, the Congress has decided to produce a **CD-ROM on landscape**.

The Congress also intends to step up its activities to help historic towns by launching a number of **seminars on historic towns and a hearing on the Urban Charter**. The CLRAE also foresees participation in and a **contribution to the Campaign on the common heritage**.

4.3 New information technologies

These new information media are also promoted within the CLRAE by the Working Group on the Local and Regional Information Society in conjunction with the Working Group on Culture, Education and the Media. The aim is to ensure a **rapid dissemination of information on new technologies and the experience of local and regional authorities already using them in their activities**. These technologies are likely to create jobs and may also help to bring about further integration of more backward or isolated areas into the economic life of their countries. Several seminars on this subject are planned.

5. WORKING METHODS, FINANCING AND STRUCTURES

5.1 Implementation of the Action Plan

The CLRAE is ready to play its rightful role in the implementation of the Action Plan, particularly in the areas within its competence. **It should continue to perform its tasks**, recognised by the Heads of State and Government, in the process of achieving greater integration of the European continent in general and, in particular, in promoting the fundamental role of the institutions of local and regional democracy.

It should be pointed out in this context that the future actions put forward by the Congress as the **education for democratic citizenship, security of citizens and social cohesion should, as a priority**, benefit from financial support.

5.2 Structures

The current structure of the Congress is based on a Statutory Resolution (January 1994), itself based on the texts of the Vienna Summit.

Since it has put forward a series of ideas which should enable it to define its status in the Council of Europe more clearly, the Congress might be involved in these discussions at the appropriate time.

The discussion on the role of the CLRAE has been widely discussed with the Committee of Wise Persons, the body instructed to examine the reforms of the Council of Europe structures.

APPENDIX III**SUMMARY OF REQUESTS
PRESENTED TO THE COMMITTEE OF WISE PERSONS**

The principal requests addressed by the Congress to the Committee of Wise Persons may be summarised as follows:

a. with regard to the specific role of the Congress:

1. genuine fulfilment of the establishment of the Congress as "the organ representing local and regional authorities" (Article 1 of Statutory Resolution (94) 3), in particular if a reform of the Council of Europe statute is to be envisaged;
2. independence, reinforcement and development of its Secretariat, election of the Head of the Secretariat by the Congress;
3. increased resources, allowing, in particular, the organisation of a second annual Plenary Session;
4. introduction of a small number of statutory committees and abolishment of the limit on the number of members of Working Groups;
5. creation of a specific Vote in the Congress budget which would cover personnel and statutory expenses, and improvement of the daily allowances accorded to Congress members;
6. reinforcement of the Congress' implication in relations with non-member States (in particular from the OSCE, the CIS, Mediterranean States and States holding observer status);

b. with regard to the Committee of Ministers:

1. broader consultation by the Committee of Ministers on issues falling within the responsibilities of the Congress;
2. increased participation by the Congress in Committee of Ministers' activities;
3. bilateral coordination meetings between the Committee of Ministers and the Congress;
4. representation and participation in more Steering Committees and specialised Ministerial Conferences, as well as in Partial Agreements, with "participant" rather than "observer" status;
5. participation in colloquies on the occasion of conferences and in all general activities of the Organisation, in particular ceremonies concerning the 50th Anniversary, implementation of the Action Plan, etc.

c. **with regard to the Parliamentary Assembly:**

1. broader consultation by the Parliamentary Assembly on issues falling within the responsibilities of the Congress;
2. more frequent contacts and coordination meetings;
3. invitation of the Congress to certain Parliamentary Assembly meetings, in particular Plenary Sessions, meetings of the Standing Committee and, when appropriate, meetings of the Bureau;
4. granting the Congress a genuine right to use the Hemicycle and the facilities of the Paris Office during certain time periods, to be decided.

d. **with regard to both the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly:**

1. tripartite meetings between the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the Congress, at least once a year, and/or
2. invitation of the Congress President to meetings of the Joint Committee.

e. **with regard to the OSCE:**

1. closer co-operation;
2. consultation of the Congress by the OSCE on activities falling within the responsibilities of the Congress;
3. co-operation with local democracy embassies/agencies;
3. implication of the Congress in contacts between the Council of Europe and the OSCE.

APPENDIX IV

LIST OF THE MAIN POLITICAL DECISIONS OF THE BUREAU

1. MEETING HELD ON 3 JULY 1997, STRASBOURG, FRANCE

1.1 Action by the Congress in Albania

The Bureau declared itself in favour of stepping up co-operation with Albania, particularly by helping to organise seminars on topics of particular interest to the Albanians. If the situation permitted, the Working Group could go to Albania in the autumn in order to identify these topics and work out practical assistance and co-operation arrangements.

1.2 Observation of the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina

The Bureau selected ten names from the list, giving priority to members of the Chamber of Local Authorities as the elections concerned were local elections.

The Bureau appointed Mr Chénard Head of the delegation and Mr Lloyd as Rapporteur of the CLRAE delegation to observe the elections.

2. MEETING HELD ON 8 SEPTEMBER 1997, VIENNA, AUSTRIA

2.1. Local and Regional Democracy

2.1.1 Situation at the City Hall of Vevcani ("The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia")

The Bureau instructed its President to write to the central government of "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" in order to obtain exact information about eventual follow-up to the case of the City Hall of Vevcani.

2.1.2 Situation at the City Hall of Kyiv (Ukraine)

The Bureau approved the joint report drawn up in collaboration with the Parliamentary Assembly (CG/Bur (4) 32) and, consequently, instructed the Secretariat to write to the Ukrainian authorities in order to maintain Mr Kossakivskiy in the national delegation until a court decision concerning his position has been pronounced. Only one member of the Chamber of Local Authorities can be replaced.

Concerning the communication on the composition of the Chamber of Regions, the Bureau accepted the appointment of Mr Zaporozhchenko.

2.1.3 Situation at the Town Hall of Novi Pazar (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia)

A press release on the events which took place in Novi Pazar was adopted, after a hearing with representatives of the dismissed Mayor and municipal council of Novi Pazar.

2.2 **Second Summit of Heads of State and Government**

The Bureau decided to present at the Summit, on behalf of the CLRAE, Recommendation 32 (1997) and the text of Mr Haegi's speech. Interventions at the level of central governments could be made in order to reinforce the references to local and regional democracy in the draft statement.

2.3 **50th Anniversary**

The Bureau appointed Mr Haegi, President of the CLRAE, Dr Hofmann, in his capacity as the President of the Chamber of Local Authorities, and Mr Likhatchev, as a representative of the Chamber of Regions, to participate on 23 September in the meeting with the delegation of the Committee of Ministers responsible for preparing the 50th Anniversary of the Council of Europe.

2.4 **Hearing organised by the European Parliament on "Cohesion and Enlargement", 24-25 November 1997 in Strasbourg**

The Bureau decided to appoint Mr Haegi and Mr Likhatchev to participate in this hearing. The Chamber of Local Authorities was also asked to appoint a representative. Members of the Standing Committee and representatives of the candidate countries to the European Union were also invited to take part in this meeting. The CLRAE contributed specifically to this hearing.

3. **MEETING HELD ON 26 NOVEMBER 1997, STRASBOURG, FRANCE**

3.1 **Local and Regional Democracy**

3.1.1 **Developments in the situation in Primorsko-Goranska (Croatia)**

Further to the information on the situation in this region, the Bureau maintained its decision to schedule a report on Croatia for the next Plenary Session of the Congress and sent a letter to the Croatian authorities asking for the organisation of new elections. The two Congress Rapporteurs were invited to meet with representatives of the county of Primorsko-Goranska.

3.1.2 **Report by Mr Frécon on "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" Trial of the Mayors of Tetovo and Gostivar**

Following a visit to Strasbourg by the Mayor of Tetovo and the press release issued by the President concerning the Tetovo and Gostivar cases, Mr Frécon visited "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" with an expert, at the request of the three Presidents. The Delegation visited the Republic to attend the trial of the Mayor of Tetovo, Mr Alajdin Demiri, who was accused of failing to execute a Constitutional Court judgement, setting aside a decision by the Tetovo Municipal Council requiring the Albanian flag to be flown beside the Macedonian flag on municipal buildings.

Following Mr Frécon's report on his mission to "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", the Bureau decided to monitor the situation.

3.1.3 Albania

Following various complaints by Albanian local and regional elected representatives, it was decided to send a CLRAE delegation to Albania to meet these representatives, as well as representatives of the Albanian Association of Mayors, governmental bodies and parliamentary representatives.

A CLRAE delegation composed of Mr Fabio Pellegrini, Rapporteur for the Working Group on Local Democracy and the follow-up to the Observation of Local Elections in Albania and Mr Gianluca Silvestrini, member of the Secretariat, visited Albania from 28 to 30 October.

After Mr Pellegrini's report on the mission to Albania, the Bureau decided to organise a meeting of the Working Group on Albania to evaluate all the information currently available to the CLRAE and to decide how to handle the matter.

3.1.4 Situation at the Kyiv City Hall

Following the report on the situation at the Kyiv City Hall, presenting a series of recommendations for action by the Bureau, a second CLRAE delegation visited Kyiv on 20 and 21 November. Two Congress members, Mr Chénard and Mr Bodfish, took part in the visit. They were accompanied by Mr Hoffschulte, consultant, and Mr Hartley from the CLRAE Secretariat. The visit to Kyiv was part of a monitoring process of the situation of local self-government in Ukraine. A full report was to be presented by the Working Group at the next Session of the CLRAE.

The Bureau decided to monitor the situation and instructed the President to write to the Ukrainian President, in order to remind him of the obligations Ukraine subscribed to when it joined the Council of Europe.

2.3 Gothenburg Final Declaration

The Bureau decided to add the above item to the agenda of the 5th Plenary Session.

4. MEETING HELD ON 3 FEBRUARY 1998, LECCE, ITALY

4.1 Migratory Flux in the Mediterranean area

The Bureau decided to create a Working Group on Mediterranean Migration in order to study the migratory phenomenon in this region. The Bureau instructed the Group to present a report at the next Congress Plenary Session.

The Bureau adopted a press release on the migratory phenomenon, in which it expressed its political support to the idea of creating an inter-regional observatory of Mediterranean migration contained in the Final Declaration of an international conference "Local and Regional Authorities in the Face of Mediterranean Migration: from Intolerance to Development", held in Bari (October 1997).

4.2 **Local and Regional Democracy**

4.2.1 **Information on the preparation of reports on the situation of local democracy in member countries**

The Bureau decided to present a report on local and regional democracy in Moldova at the next Standing Committee meeting. It decided to present reports on the situation in Croatia, Bulgaria, the United Kingdom and Latvia at the next Plenary Session of the Congress. The situation in the Russian Federation will be the subject of monitoring.

As far as the situation of local and regional democracy in Albania is concerned, the Bureau decided to instruct the President of the CLRAE to write a letter to the President of Albania, suggesting that the Albanian authorities submit the draft laws under examination, particularly the draft law on local finances, for the legal opinion of LODE Programme experts.

4.2.2 **Ukraine**

- **Nomination of the CLRAE Delegation to observe the Municipal Elections on 28 March**

The Bureau decided to send a delegation to observe the elections. This mission was organised jointly with the Parliamentary Assembly, with Mr Chénard as Vice-President of the Delegation on behalf of the Congress. The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to establish contacts with the Parliamentary Assembly in order to form a joint delegation to observe the elections.

- **Decision of the Supreme Court of Ukraine**

The Bureau decided to issue a press release and to write to the President of Ukraine urging him to ensure the implementation of the Supreme Court decision confirming the re-establishment of Mr Kossakivskiy in his position of Mayor of Kyiv. The press release was to reflect some positive aspects concerning the evolution of the situation, in particular the signature and ratification of the European Charter of Local Self-Government by Ukraine.

4.2.3 **Situation in the Municipality of Novi Pazar (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia) Information sent by the Yugoslav Authorities**

Bearing in mind the information transmitted, the Bureau decided not to invite the representatives of local and regional authorities of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, in their capacity as Special Guests, to the 5th Plenary Session.

4.3 **Follow-up to the Second Summit of Heads of State and Government**

The Bureau instructed the Secretariat to update Document CG/Bur (4) 61, adding proposals that certain CLRAE members made and pointing out the priority of CLRAE activities.

The Bureau decided that Document CG/Bur (4) 61 would be the basis of future dialogue with the Working Group GT "SUIVI".

4.4 **Status of the Congress**

The Bureau decided that the preliminary document presented by the Secretariat should include an introduction pointing out the political role of the Congress and include two parts reiterating the values of the CLRAE.

5. **MEETING HELD ON 5 MARCH 1998, STRASBOURG, FRANCE**

5.1 **Local and regional democracy**

5.1.1 **Ukraine Municipal elections**

After hearing the report by Mr Hartley, Secretary of the Congress Chamber of Local Authorities, on the municipal elections in Ukraine;

Taking note of the disagreement between the President of Ukraine and the Parliament with regard to the organisation of municipal elections in Kyiv and Sebastopol;

Bearing in mind the need to work with the Council of Europe Parliamentary Assembly on preparations for the monitoring mission, the Bureau decided:

- to continue the process of selecting a CLRAE monitoring team;
- to maintain contact with the Office of the Clerk of the Parliamentary Assembly with a view to co-ordinating the monitoring mission for the municipal and parliamentary elections in Ukraine.

5.1.2 **"The Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" Trials of the mayors of Gostivar and Tetovo Information presented in the OSCE report**

In the light of the information on further events in Tetovo and Gostivar as set out in documents CG/Bur (4) 97 and CG/Bur (4) 97 Addendum, concerning the Skopje Appeal Court's decision to reduce the sentences of Mr Rupi Osmani and Mr Refik Dauti, the Mayor of Gostivar and the Chair of the Municipal Council respectively, the Bureau instructed its President to meet the Permanent Representative of "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia" and to follow developments.

5.1.3 **Presidential and parliamentary elections in Kosovo, scheduled for 22 March (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia)**

Taking note of the information supplied by the Secretariat on the situation in Kosovo, the Bureau decided to issue a press release calling urgently on:

- the Albanian majority in Kosovo to persuade their compatriots to cease all acts of violence immediately and to desist from demanding independence;
- the Yugoslav and Serbian authorities to stop all violence towards, and provocation of, the Albanians in Kosovo immediately and to restore the province of Kosovo's autonomous status immediately by means of dialogue with representatives of the Albanian community in Kosovo;
- the international community to intervene in time for once, if necessary by a presence in the area, before a fresh conflict erupted in the Balkans.

5.2 **Status of the Congress**

Discussion of the CLRAE's position within the Council of Europe in view of the dialogue with the Committee of Wise Persons

Discussion of document CG/Bur (4) 101, following the Bureau meeting in Lecce

The Bureau approved the above-mentioned document and decided to transmit it to the Committee of Wise Persons.

5.3 **Report on the Congress President's visit to St Petersburg (4-6 February 1998)**

After hearing the President's report on his official visit to St Petersburg, the Bureau decided to contact the authorities in Belarus, in particular Mr Krassutsky, Chair of the Committee on Local Authorities of the CIS Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, about the possibility of holding a colloquy in Minsk on the principles of local and regional democracy.

6. **MEETING HELD ON 27 APRIL 1998, GENEVA, SWITZERLAND**

6.1 **Parliamentary Assembly Standing Committee (18 March 1998)**

The Bureau took note of the report by Mr Chénard. It expressed its satisfaction that, for the first time, a member of the CLRAE Bureau had been invited to the Parliamentary Assembly Standing Committee meeting.

6.1.1 **Adopted texts by the Assembly concerning recent activities and proposals for reform of the CLRAE**

Having examined the Parliamentary Assembly's texts on the CLRAE, the Bureau decided to instruct its President to write a letter to the President of the Parliamentary Assembly, Mrs Leni Fisher, in which the positive aspects of the Assembly's recommendations should be underlined.

6.1.2 **Adopted texts and information on the unofficial elections of 22 March on the situation in Kosovo**

6.1.3 **Request from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to join the Council of Europe**

The Bureau:

- concerning the application of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to join the Council of Europe, took note of the fact that the Committee of Ministers has only informed the Parliamentary Assembly about this application;
- took note of the complaint received from the representatives of Sanjak;
- decided to place the report on the situation in Kosovo on the programme of the Plenary Session of the Congress;
- designated MM Cuatrecasas and Likhatchev as Rapporteurs on the situation in Kosovo;
- decided that this report, as well as the Recommendation and Resolution, should contain a certain number of proposals with regard to a possible CLRAE contribution which should, nevertheless, take into account the limited means of the Congress and highlight examples of special autonomous status already existing in Europe.

6.1.4 **Initiation, by the Parliamentary Assembly, of the procedure for the accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Council of Europe**

The Bureau took note of the Bureau of the Parliamentary Assembly's decision to initiate the procedure for the accession of Bosnia and Herzegovina to the Council of Europe.

It also noted the possibility for the CLRAE to be represented in the joint Working Group on local territorial re-organisation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Bureau decided, in the first instance, *to be represented in this Group by two experts, MM Levrat and Rivolier.*

6.2 **Situation concerning Local and Regional Democracy**

6.2.1 **Ukraine**

Municipal elections in Ukraine on 29 March 1998

The Bureau approved the conclusions of the mission report, on the condition that certain modifications were made, and instructed its Secretariat to inform the Ukrainian authorities, as well as the Committee of Ministers and the Parliamentary Assembly, of these conclusions.

In the light of the points made by MM Kieres and Chénard on the post-electoral situation in Ukraine, the Bureau reserved its right to give supplementary information concerning this situation to delegates at the 5th Plenary Session.

6.2.2 Proposals to prepare reports on the situation of local and regional democracy for the 6th Plenary Session of the CLRAE

The Bureau decided to prepare the following reports for the 6th Congress Plenary Session:

- the situation of local and regional democracy in the Netherlands;
- the situation of local democracy in San Marino and Germany, in particular the financial situation of cities;
- the situation of regional democracy in Finland.

6.2.3 "The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia"

Information on the situation in Gostivar

Having examined the information on the trial of the Mayor of Gostivar, contained in document CG/Bur (4) 123, the Bureau:

- expressed its concern about the risk of extension and transformation of the situation in a conflict similar to that in Kosovo;
- decided to send Mr Frécon, Rapporteur on the situation in Gostivar and Tetovo for the Standing Committee meeting of 27 November 1997, to "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia".

6.3 5th Plenary Session

Draft programme for the Session

The Bureau decided to place the report on Kosovo on the programme of the Plenary Session for debate and vote and to adopt this report, Recommendation and Resolution at the Bureau meeting on 25 May.

APPENDIX V**CONTRIBUTION OF THE CONGRESS
TO THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE**

The Council of Europe was created on 5 May 1949 and the Organisation has decided to celebrate its 50 years of existence in 1999 via a series of events organised by the Committee of Ministers, the Parliamentary Assembly and the CLRAE, and by the different sectors of the Organisation.

In order to prepare this anniversary, the Committee of Ministers set up a Working Group of the Deputies (GT-50) which, from the outset, invited the Congress for an exchange of views, ie on 4 July 1997 and on 23 September 1997. Hungary will take over the presidency of the Committee of Ministers in May 1999 and Ambassador Guyla Braun, Permanent Representative of Hungary to the Council of Europe, is thus President of this Deputies' Working Group.

The dialogue between the CLRAE and the GT-50 gave the CLRAE the opportunity to presents its proposals regarding the celebration of this anniversary and to be consulted on the drafting of a Message and the definition of a Slogan, to be sent to the different capital cities with a view to encouraging the organisation of events in all the member countries. It was also decided that, in each member country, a national organising committee should be created, made up of governmental representatives, members of the Parliamentary Assembly and local and regional representatives.

Local and regional authorities have a key role to play in broadcasting the celebration of this anniversary in the different countries and in transmitting the message to European citizens. With this in mind, in March 1997, the Congress' Chamber of Local Authorities launched an appeal to European towns, inviting them to name a street or square after the Council of Europe. In addition, they were asked to display Council of Europe posters in public places on the occasion of the Anniversary. For this purpose, the Council of Europe's Directorate for Communication and New Information Technologies is preparing information material, posters and a number of publications. Almost 200 towns have already responded favourably and we hope that, in the months to come, other towns and municipalities, as well as European regions, will join in the celebrations.

During the month of May 1999, a series of events will be organised in Strasbourg, the seat of the Council of Europe, as well as in Hungary, in London and probably in various European capitals.

The Parliamentary Assembly will also bring together, in the Council of Europe's hemicycle, delegations of young people from the different European countries for a debate on the construction of the Greater Europe.

The Congress itself intends to develop its contribution to this event and, after the 5th Plenary Session, the Bureau will create a Working Group responsible for coordinating the Congress' action and for encouraging towns and regions to contribute to the celebrations.

APPENDIX VI**LIST OF THE PRESIDENT'S VISITS****1997**

European Conference on Nuclear Security and Local and Regional Democracy
Gothenburg, Sweden, 24-26 June 1997

Official visit to Romania
Bucharest, 26-27 August 1997

4th Economic Forum of the Regions of Europe
Vienna, Austria, 9-11 September 1997

Hearing on Social Cohesion and Enlargement, organised by the European Parliament
Strasbourg, France, 24-25 November 1997

Meeting with the Bureau of the CDLR
Strasbourg, France, 26 November 1997

Meeting of the Committee and Assembly of local democracy embassies
Ohrid, "the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia", 29-30 November 1997

Visit to Tunisia - Meeting with local and regional authorities in the framework of
preparations for the 5th Conference on Mediterranean Regions and the Black Sea
Tunis, Tunisia, 9-11 December 1997

Visit to Bosnia and Herzegovina - Meeting with representatives of the Federation of Bosnia
and Herzegovina on the situation of local democracy and reforms under way
Sarajevo, Zavidovici, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 16-18 December 1997

1998

- . Meeting of the Committee and Assembly of local democracy embassies
Strasbourg, France, 26-27 January 1998
- . Meeting with the authorities of the Region of Puglia on migratory phenomena in the Mediterranean
Congress Bureau
Lecce, Italy, 3-4 February 1998
- . Visit to St. Petersburg at the invitation of the Inter-Parliamentary Assembly of member States of the Commonwealth of Independent States
St. Petersburg, Russian Federation, 4-6 February 1998
- . Euro-Med Round Table on partnership for co-operation and reconciliation in the Middle East
Strasbourg, France, 12-13 February 1998
- . Hearing and meeting of the joint Parliamentary Assembly/CLRAE Working Group responsible for the preparation of the 5th Conference of Mediterranean Regions and the Black Sea
Opatija, Croatia, 16-17 February 1998
- . Meeting with Mrs Wulff-Matthis, Commissioner at the European Commission
Strasbourg, France, 11 March 1998
- . Monaco Economic Summits, in the framework of preparations for the 5th Conference of Mediterranean Regions and the Black Sea
Principality of Monaco, 19-22 March 1998
- . Intergovernmental Consultation Conference on the preliminary draft European Landscape Convention
Florence, Italy, 2-4 April 1998
- . International Conference on the European Charter of Local Self-Government organised by the Russian Douma
Moscow, 22-24 April 1998
- . Meeting of a Congress delegation with the Committee of Wise Persons
Strasbourg, 24 April 1998
- . Visit by a Congress delegation to Albania - Meeting with local and regional authorities on current draft reforms
Tirana, Albania, 5-8 May 1998
- . Meetings between a joint Parliamentary Assembly/CLRAE delegation and Tunisian authorities in the framework of preparations for the 5th Conference of Mediterranean Regions and the Black Sea
Tunis, Tunisia, 11-14 May 1998