

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 206 (2006)¹ on North-South Centre: contribution of local and regional authorities to promote the efficiency of the work of the Centre

The Congress,

1. Having regard to its resolutions on cultural identity issues in peripheral urban areas: the role of local and regional authorities and its resolution on intercultural dialogue: the responsibilities of local authorities;
2. Having regard to the report of its Committee on Culture and Education on the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity (North-South Centre) of the Council of Europe;
3. Considering that the fundamental mandate of the North-South Centre is raising public awareness of global interdependence and solidarity issues, on the one hand, and of promoting the basic values of human rights and democracy in other parts of the world, on the other;
4. Recognising that since 11 September 2001 the Centre's mission has become ever more important and that the Action Plan, adopted by the Council of Europe's 3rd Summit, held in Warsaw in May 2005, recognises the importance of the Centre in promoting the intercultural dialogue with the neighbouring regions of Europe, the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Central Asia;
5. Noting that local and regional authorities in Europe play an increasingly important role in promoting a better public understanding of the need to engage in a constructive co-operation with the countries of the South and that many towns and regions have set up substantial co-operation programmes of their own and are engaged in promoting the idea that we live in an increasingly interdependent world in which the fate of all countries and peoples is intimately bound up with each other;
6. Noting also that in many countries national associations of local and regional authorities are involved in international co-operation activities;
7. Considering that local and regional authorities and their national organisations can play an increasingly important role in such matters as promoting local democracy, city to city co-operation, co-development, global and development education, environmental protection and habitat;
8. Considering that most developed European countries still should reach the United Nations target of 0.7% of Gross Domestic Product for official development aid which

requires stronger public support but that public knowledge of global interdependence issues is often weak;

9. Considering also the commitments made by Council of Europe member states to achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals adopted by world leaders in September 2000;

10. Appreciating, therefore, the efforts of the North-South Centre to arouse greater public support for international solidarity notably by increasing and improving global and development education in the Council of Europe member states, and by developing in countries where these did not yet exist programmes of support for national structures, policies and funding for this purpose;

11. Welcoming the fact that, from the outset, the North-South Centre functions on a "quadripartite" basis, involving governments, parliaments, local and regional authorities and civil society organisations both in its statutory bodies and in its programmes and activities;

12. Underlining that as local and regional authorities, together with civil society organisations, are closest to the citizens they must play an essential role in the work of the Centre;

13. Consequently believes that local and regional authorities should further explore possibilities to increase their participation in the work of the Centre, for instance by reactivating the North-South working group which had to be dissolved a number of years ago for budgetary reasons;

14. Stressing that local authorities should also work more closely with national associations of local and regional authorities, in particular in the south of Europe, in order to promote a democratic transition and local self-government;

15. Stressing that a decentralised approach to development policy has several advantages: a better participation of the population in the conception and implementation of development projects, the setting-up of horizontal North-South solidarity networks based on greater mutual confidence, and a better sensitisation of the public at large to the need for North-South solidarity;

16. Realising that, as education policy in Council of Europe member states becomes increasingly decentralised, integration of global perspectives into curricula requires the engagement of local authorities if it is to consistently succeed;

17. Encourages national associations of local authorities, in countries where they do not yet exist, to set up an international arm or joint service agencies which can provide support for development activities, pool resources, and help to unify and concert activities;

18. Therefore the Congress decides:

a. to recognise the importance of local and regional authorities in Europe in promoting a well informed North-South dialogue based on mutual understanding and benefits and to recognise the North-South Centre as an important

instrument of the Council of Europe in promoting the North-South dialogue at local and regional level;

b. to set up joint activities with the North-South Centre that aim at facilitating exchanges on best practices in such areas as raising public awareness of global interdependence issues at the local or regional level, setting up and managing co-operation projects, promoting co-development with the help of migrant communities, and strengthening the intercultural and inter-religious dialogue;

c. to work with the North-South Centre in facilitating a dialogue and co-operation between local and regional authorities organisations in the North and the South in a variety of areas such as democratic governance, poverty alleviation, environmental protection, local democracy; or experience-sharing in other specific areas of common interest;

d. to recognise the importance of the Centre in promoting intercultural dialogue with the neighbouring regions of Europe, the Mediterranean, the Middle East and Central Asia, in accordance with the Action Plan adopted by the 3rd Council of Europe Summit, and to strengthen its co-operation with the Centre in addressing these issues as they are at the heart of local and regional communities;

e. to consider whether a similar approach, as chosen by the Parliamentary Assembly, in concluding a co-operation agreement with the Centre should be envisaged so that the specific competence and expertise of the latter becomes more readily available to the Congress.

1. Debated and adopted by the Standing Committee of the Congress on 16 March 2006 (see Document CG (12) 29, draft resolution presented by H. Lund (Denmark, L, SOC), rapporteur).