

1299bis meeting of the Ministers' Deputies – Strasbourg, France, 15 November 2017

Speech by Gudrun Mosler-Törnström, President of the Congress

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Transfer of the Chairmanship of the Committee of Minister from the Czech Republic to Denmark

Strasbourg, France, 15 November 2017

Dear Ministers
Dear Ambassadors,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

In a very fruitful exchange of views in this very room three weeks ago I recalled the Congress's determination to contribute to the defense of the common values of the Council of Europe and the democratic stabilisation of our continent – together with the hundreds of Congress members who represent more than 200.000 local and regional authorities all over Europe.

The handover ceremony that brings us together today is an opportunity to reaffirm the Congress's will to actively participate in a concerted manner within the Council of Europe for jointly achieving the objectives of the Organisation's activities.

The Congress, as Council of Europe entity representing the local and regional level, is ready to contribute to such co-ordination with national governments, with representatives of national parliaments and with other entities of the Organisation like the Commissioner for Human Rights and wishes to pursue its efforts with the incoming Danish Chairmanship.

The pooling of experience, responsibilities and efforts at all levels of governance, which we promote at the institutional level, is a reflection of what we defend on the ground, in our member States.

Over the years, decentralisation has progressively gained in importance in Europe and central governments have granted increasingly additional competences and responsibilities to local and regional authorities. Such elected politicians now exercise great influence on the social, economic and democratic development of our societies. I would like to reiterate here that local and regional authorities have important cards to play since they develop their own policies within their competences and, at the same time, also implement many of the policies decided at the national level. It is therefore with the representatives of these authorities that we must maintain a strong, ongoing dialogue, to find together the answers that will ensure the security and stability of our societies.

Ladies and gentlemen, Excellences

Allow me to thank the Czech Chairmanship for the openness and co-operation it has shown towards the Congress, which has resulted in numerous exchanges with the national authorities. I would like to thank, in particular, Minister Zaoralek for our many fruitful exchanges and Vice-Minister Mlsna who participated in our October session. The representatives of the local and regional authorities took also much of their time for the Congress as shown by our Bureau meeting in Brno last June.

Minister Zaoralek, the Czech Chairmanship has been one that was based on the spirit of openness and respect towards the various entities of the Council of Europe. It is now coming to an end and I have no doubt that this spirit will continue with the Danish Chairmanship, which begins today.

Dear Minister Samuelsen, dear incoming Chair, on behalf of the Congress, I wish you all the best for the next six months. We will certainly have other opportunities to interact with you and the Congress would be happy to welcome you to our March 2018 session.

Thank you for your attention