



4th UNECE Forum of Mayors

Speech by Mathieu MORI, Secretary General of the Congress

Opening and Welcome

Geneva, Switzerland – 30 September

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Dear participants,

- It is a great pleasure to be with you; Days after the Summit of the Future, and hours before you are asked to adopt the statement of the Cities Summit of the Future.
- I am not allowed to vote but I can only encourage you to adopt it since it makes reference to the Congress recommendation on the UN Pact for the future to our 46 Member States.
- I agree with every aspect of the statement but this morning I would like to highlight one aspect specifically : the one on **transforming global governance**.
- Indeed, your statement stresses the need for local and regional government to participate directly in the work of the UN.
- The Pact for the future makes reference to this need. Not necessarily in the exact terms we would have liked but it is a start.
- 67 years ago, my own institution, the Council of Europe, took the very first steps to institutionalise the dialogue with local and regional authorities by creating a conference of local and regional authorities which was invited to take part in the political dialogue of the institution. Before taking this step, only the governments and the national parliaments were shaping the policies of the Council of Europe.
- I have dug out the speeches that were made at the launch of this first conference of local and regional authorities. And if you allow me, I would like to read you some parts of the speeches made at this occasion :
- First here is a quote about why it was crucial in the early days of the European construction to involve local authorities:

- « L'idée est de pallier l'indifférence de l'opinion publique dans nos différents Etats vis-à-vis de l'Europe. Cette indifférence provient d'une information notoirement insuffisante qui prive la construction européenne de la volonté populaire ».
- Or il n'est pas possible de trouver zéloteurs plus nombreux et plus efficaces que les administrateurs locaux. Les maires constituent, un gigantesque ensemble de plusieurs millions d'êtres dont les deux caractéristiques principales sont le dévouement à leurs concitoyens et la confiance personnelle de ces derniers à leur égard.
- And a second quote about the historical nature of this moment:
- C'est, à ma connaissance, mes chers collègues, la première fois dans l'histoire des démocraties que les pouvoirs locaux sont invités par des représentants parlementaires, et avec l'agrément des gouvernements, à donner leur avis sur ce que pourraient être les modalités de leur participation à des institutions européennes en voie d'élaboration.
- Cette mémorable innovation ne marque pas seulement la volonté d'honorer, l'univers des élus et magistrats locaux, qui sont indispensables à l'existence des sociétés humaines, elle exprime également le souci d'éviter que, dans l'avenir, l'Europe unie ne tombe à son tour dans les erreurs d'une centralisation excessive
- This was in 1957 and I believe these speeches have not aged a bit and if you change the word Europe by South America, North Africa or any parts of the world, they still remain relevant.
- Today the Congress of local and regional authorities of the Council of Europe is one of the 2 political assemblies of the Council of Europe and is involved in every aspect of the work of the Council of Europe, without anyone dreaming of going back to only one political assembly made up of national parliamentarians.
- Following the Pact of the Future, I am confident that the UN is also on the right path to achieve its own governance aggiornamento.
- Finally your statement emphasizes the need for enhanced decentralisation. In Europe we live in a continent where the right to local democracy and decentralisation is protected by law. The 46 CoE MS have indeed ratified the European Charter of local self-governance.
- And we at the Congress of the Council of Europe monitor its implementation every 5 years in all MS.
- Because this treaty has become a core treaty in Europe, one of the very few ones ratified by all MS, and because such a treaty does not exist anywhere else in the world, we are currently exploring the possibility of opening it for ratification by non Member States.
- Meaning that any country in the world could ratify it. This could be the start of a global movement towards a legal guarantee of local democracy and decentralisation and I hope

this opening of the ratification to non-member states will be legally and politically achieved in the coming years.

I have obviously this morning only stressed the positive points. But I do genuinely believe the aims of your declaration are reachable.

With you the mayors, with the leading civil society and associations of local and regional governments and with the back up of more and more agencies and international organisations, we can make it.

The pact of the future is a step in the right direction and you can count on our continuing support towards a renewed multilateralism.