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Speech by Leendert VERBEEK (Netherlands, SOC/G/PD)
President of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of
the Council of Europe

“SDGs in focus: SDG 11 and interlinkages with other SDGs”

(3 minutes / 370 words)

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

It is an honour and pleasure for me to be back in New York addressing the High-Level Political Forum. A lot has changed since last year and yet we continue facing multiple crises – armed conflicts such as Russia’s war against Ukraine, migration and forced displacement, food and energy crises, climate change – which clearly show that future policies must be geared towards building resilience in our communities.

The Congress, as the voice of local and regional authorities at the Council of Europe and the guardian of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, sets the local and regional framework for the implementation of SDGs in all 46 Council of Europe member states, with a special emphasis on SDG 11.

Resilient and sustainable cities and regions are an essential part of building a peaceful, secure, and cohesive future, therefore in March, the Congress adopted a recommendation calling for accelerated localisation of SDGs and for greater involvement of local and regional authorities in the implementation of Agenda 2030. In this recommendation, the Congress calls on national governments to give local and regional authorities proper autonomy of action and proper means for achieving SDG targets in their communities.

The urgent need to localise SDGs was also reflected in the Call for Action, signed by major European associations and institutions of local and regional authorities on the eve of the 4th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Council of Europe, in Reykjavik, in May.

Moreover, the Reykjavik Declaration clearly stresses the important role of local and regional leaders in upholding democracy, human rights, and the rule of law and commits to support the essential role of multi-level governance in delivering human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Ladies and gentlemen,

It is our strong belief that local and regional authorities can and must lead the transformation towards the achievement of all SDGs and we are pleased that the Draft Political Declaration to be adopted in September commits to further localising SDGs and that the SDG Progress report of the UN Secretary General highlights that local action is a precondition for delivering the promise of the SDGs.

Thank you.

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