

Strasbourg, 1 October 2019

## **Statement by the former Presidents of the Congress**

We, the former Presidents of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, meeting in Strasbourg on the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the Council of Europe, wish to welcome the Congress' positive evolution and encouraging developments within the architecture of the Council of Europe.

We are, more than ever, convinced of the value of the Congress within the intergovernmental institution of the Council of Europe, just as our governments are convinced of the essential role that their local and regional authorities play in the democratic functioning of their societies.

We appreciate the growing interest of governments in the Congress' monitoring of local democracy, through the monitoring of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, the observation of local elections, post-monitoring activities and the resulting co-operation programmes, and welcome the increased willingness of governments to participate in debates on the quality of their own local governance at Congress sessions.

That is why, at the beginning of the mandate of the new Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Marija Pejčinović Burić, we solemnly address her to encourage her to give the Congress the political priority it deserves and the means it needs to fulfil its mission. We are addressing the new Secretary General at a crucial political moment in European history. The crisis of confidence felt by our citizens in the institutions confers on us a special mandate, an imperative duty to rise to this challenge.

As our communities are the institutions closest to the citizens, our responsibility is huge; this is why, as local elected representatives our ability to engage and animate a real local democratic life is essential to the robustness of our societies.

We, the former Presidents, are convinced of the importance of the support of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe in giving the Congress the place it deserves within the Organisation.

**Lucien Sergent, France (1990/1992)**  
**Bengt Mollstedt, Sweden (1992/1994)**  
**Alexander Tchernoff, The Netherlands (1994/1996)**  
**Claude Haegi, Switzerland (1996/1998)**  
**Alain Chénard, France (1998/2000)**  
**Llibert Cuatrecasas, Spain (2000/2002)**  
**Herwig Van Staa, Austria (2002/2004-2012/2014)**  
**Giovanni Di Stasi, Italy (2004/2005)**  
**Halvdan Skard, Norway (2006/2008)**  
**Yavuz Mildon, Turkey (2008/2009)**  
**Ian Micallef, Malta (2009/2010)**  
**Keith Whitmore, United Kingdom (2010/2012)**  
**Gudrun Mosler-Törnström, Austria (2016/2018)**