

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 174 (2004)¹ on the 4th Forum of Cities and Regions of South-eastern Europe, Prijedor, Bosnia and Herzegovina (22-23 September 2003)

The Congress,

1. On the basis of the Prijedor Declaration, adopted at the 4th Forum of Cities and Regions of South-eastern Europe (10th Economic Forum);

2. Asks the Bureau of the Congress to renew the terms of reference of the Group of local and regional representatives of South-eastern Europe and align them with the new priorities for action in South-eastern Europe and other regions of Europe;

3. Asks the local and regional authorities of South-eastern Europe to:

a. do their utmost to help returnees to reintegrate in their places of origin, and guarantee refugees and/or displaced persons non-discriminatory access to social rights (healthcare, housing, employment, education, welfare assistance/pensions, etc.) in their current place of residence and remove any administrative barriers;

b. do their utmost at all times to improve the living conditions, and so facilitate the integration, of returnees, refugees and/or displaced persons and, for this purpose, promote their employment at all levels of central and local government and also in the police administration;

c. make use of the possibilities offered by the Council of Europe Development Bank;

4. Calls on non-governmental organisations, and particularly the Assembly of European Regions (AER), the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR), the Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR), United Cities and Local Governments and the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (CPMR) to:

a. foster technical and human partnerships, exchanges and one-off projects with South-eastern European cities and regions in a wide range of fields, such as energy, environment, transport, water and waste management, youth, education and culture;

b. take part in Congress activities aimed at developing intermunicipal, interregional and transfrontier co-operation between local and regional authorities in South-eastern Europe, and also, more generally, decentralised co-operation activities, for example:

i. the Local Democracy Agency (LDA) Programme;

ii. the SEDECO (Service for Decentralised Co-operation in Europe), set up by the Congress, the City of Lausanne's Syni programme and the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), to give an impetus to the establishment of partnerships between European local and regional authorities;

c. step up their activities in South-eastern Europe and provide expert guidance on the setting-up and operation of Euroregions, particularly by establishing partnerships between the Euroregions;

5. Instructs the ad hoc Working Group of local and regional representatives of South-eastern Europe to continue supervising the CLRAE's activities in South-eastern Europe, in particular by:

a. ensuring that action is taken on the proposals made in the Final Declaration of the 4th Forum of Cities and Regions of South-eastern Europe (10th Economic Forum), which took place in Prijedor (Bosnia and Herzegovina) on 22 and 23 September 2003, and in the debates at the 11th Plenary Session (25-27 May 2004) on the CLRAE's activities under the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe and, more generally, the political and economic situation in South-eastern Europe;

b. bringing the interests of local and regional authorities in South-eastern Europe to the attention of those in charge of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe, and asking donor countries and organisations to provide funding for priority projects in the field of local and regional democracy;

c. continuing activities already conducted in co-operation with national associations of local authorities;

d. developing the Network of Associations of Local Authorities of South-East Europe (NALAS) and, in particular, preparing to formalise its NGO status, launch the network officially and hold its first elections;

e. developing the SEDECO (Service for Decentralised Co-operation in Europe) project, set up by the Congress, the City of Lausanne's Syni programme and UNOPS (the United Nations Office for Project Services), to give an impetus to the establishment of partnerships between European local and regional authorities;

f. providing clear information on the possibilities of obtaining loans from the Council of Europe Development Bank in the various countries of South-eastern Europe;

6. With this in mind, asks the Association of Local Democracy Agencies to continue its practical work and activities for refugees in South-eastern Europe.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 27 May 2004, 3rd Sitting (see Document CG (11) 8, draft resolution presented by S. Sofianski (Bulgaria, L, EPP/CD) and N. Polić (Bosnia and Herzegovina, R, NR), rapporteurs).