

THE CONGRESS OF LOCAL AND REGIONAL AUTHORITIES

Resolution 288 (2009)¹

The global challenge of climate change: local responses

1. The intensification of climate change is now unavoidable. Local and regional authorities, very much aware of global challenges and of their impact on the areas they administer and on citizens' lives, have taken innovative and exemplary initiatives to combat climate change and ensure that their territories adapt to its consequences.

2. The Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe welcomes these initiatives and, in this respect, refers to its recent work on climate change and energy,² in which it expresses the view that local and regional authorities have a key role to play in ensuring that climate change does not undergo even more serious and less controllable developments.

3. It is through proactive public policy with regard to mobility and transport, town planning and spatial development, energy and housing that they can meet the dual challenge: firstly, to make a significant contribution to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and, secondly, to adapt to new climatic conditions and to reduce territorial vulnerability.

4. Convinced that climate change necessitates resolute policies and a strong commitment by all local and regional authorities and infra-national tiers of governance, the Congress calls for integrated strategies in the fields of energy and climate change and for integrated mitigation and adaptation measures which do not counteract each other.

5. It also believes in leading by example and considers that the local and regional levels are the most appropriate for raising public awareness and motivating people to make significant changes in their behaviour and lifestyles.

6. The Congress welcomes the growing momentum of local and regional climate policies and the commitment of European local and regional authorities to the global effort to achieve a significant reduction in emissions, as well as their exemplary action, through initiatives such as the Covenant of Mayors, towards energy efficiency. It is nonetheless concerned about the future of these policies in this period of financial and economic crisis.

7. The current crisis must not overshadow the principal challenge of the 21st century – climate stability – or, even more importantly, the huge cost of inaction. This crisis offers an opportunity for more ecological regeneration measures. Although the downturn in activity and the recession result in decreased energy consumption, there is the danger that they

also act as a brake on investments which are essential to meet the challenges of climate change and to find a more environmentally friendly approach to the ways in which goods are produced and consumed.

8. The Congress consequently calls on local and regional elected representatives to envisage, without delay, climate protection and adaptation measures which would foster the emergence of a low-carbon economy and thereby reduce dependence on fossil fuels, create new jobs and sectors of activity, and bring social benefits for citizens.

9. The year 2009 should see the conclusion, at the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP 15) in Copenhagen in December 2009, of a new international agreement on climate change, which would take over from the Kyoto Protocol after 2012. The Congress welcomes the strong mobilisation of local and regional authorities to ensure the recognition of their role in and contribution to the objectives of the new agreement and supports the drawing up of a persuasive message to be addressed to the governments who are party to the negotiations.³

10. The Congress supports the call launched at the Local Government Climate Change Leadership Summit, organised in Copenhagen in June 2009, on the initiative of the association of Danish local authorities, in co-operation with European and worldwide local and regional government associations and networks, to influence the international negotiations on climate change.

11. In the light of the above, the Congress urges the local and regional authorities of the member and observer states of the Council of Europe to:

a. call on their respective national governments so that, at the climate change conference (COP 15) in Copenhagen in December 2009, the fundamental role of local and regional authorities in the fight against climate change is recognised as well as the significance of their actions in the national implementation of a new ambitious climate agreement;

b. join with their national delegations in order to participate actively in the Copenhagen world climate conference and in the meetings specifically aimed at local and regional authorities;

c. take into account the recent Congress recommendations on climate change and on energy⁴ when implementing their climate policy, and see to it that:

i. their strategy is based on two pillars: a reinforced mitigation policy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and an adaptation policy to prepare for climate change and protect individuals and assets against its consequences;

ii. climate and energy policies are closely linked and that all sector-specific public policies are consistent;

iii. they highlight both territorial dynamism and individual commitment from citizens by taking a leading, co-ordinating role in a partnership-based approach in favour of the climate;

iv. ensure that proper training is provided to respond adequately to the new challenges.

12. The Congress requests its Committee on Sustainable Development to:

a. pursue its activities relating to various climate and energy matters, in particular those concerning risk governance of natural hazards due to climate modifications and those concerning the erosion of maritime facades of coastal towns and cities in Europe which are facing a probable dramatic rise in sea levels;

b. to promote, in this respect, co-operation with its counterpart committee in the European Union Committee of the Regions and to hold regular exchanges with national and

international associations representing local and regional authorities.

1. Debated and adopted by the Congress on 14 October 2009, 2nd Sitting (see Document CG(17)8, explanatory memorandum presented by J. J. Nygaard, Denmark (L, NR), rapporteur).

2. Resolution 236 (2007) on climate change: approaches at local and regional level;

Resolution 248 (2008) on climate change: building adaptive capacity of local and regional authorities;

Resolution 262 (2008) on public local and regional action: for a new energy culture.

3. The Local Government Climate Roadmap, initiated by ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability), UCLG (United Cities and Local Governments), Metropolis, the C40 Climate Leadership Group and the World Mayors Council on Climate Change, and the Joint Declaration "Climate change: global challenges – local solutions" by CEMR (Council of European Municipalities and Regions), Climate Alliance, Energie-Cités and Eurocities on the occasion of the 14th United Nations climate change conference (COP 14) held in Poznan (Poland).

4. See footnote 2.