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The UN Pact for the Future: The essential role of local and regional authorities in global sustainable development

Bureau of the Congress

Co-rapporteurs:¹ Gunn Marit HELGESEN, Norway (R, EPP/CCE)
Carla NUNES TAVARES, Portugal (L, SOC/G/PD)

Draft recommendation (for vote) 2

Summary

The United Nations will hold a Summit for the Future on 22-23 September 2024, which seeks to accelerate efforts to meet the existing international commitments and take concrete steps to respond to emerging global challenges and opportunities. This recommendation is the Congress contribution to the United Nations Summit of the Future.

As an outcome from the Summit, the UN Member States will agree on an action-oriented outcome document called Pact for the Future, which will unite the global community around an international system that is better prepared to manage current and future challenges.

Bearing in mind that the current and future global challenges can only be addressed by harnessing the power of local and regional governments as the level closest to citizens, the Congress calls on member States of the Council of Europe to support the role of local and regional authorities in delivering the global agendas for sustainable development, including the Pact for the Future, and invites the relevant parties involved in the above process to take note of this recommendation.

¹ L: Chamber of Local Authorities / R: Chamber of Regions
EPP/CCE: European People's Party Group in the Congress
SOC/G/PD: Group of Socialists, Greens and Progressive Democrats
ILDG: Independent Liberal and Democratic Group
ECR: European Conservatives and Reformists Group
NR: Members not belonging to a political group of the Congress

DRAFT RECOMMENDATION²

1. The United Nations will hold a Summit for the Future on 22-23 September 2024 which seeks to accelerate efforts to meet existing international commitments and take concrete steps to respond to emerging global challenges and opportunities.
2. Under the theme “Multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow”, member States will reflect on progress towards the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its pledge to leave no one behind, the commitment to end poverty and hunger everywhere, to combat inequality within and among countries, to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies, to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources and to create conditions for sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, as well as to realise the human rights of all and achieve gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls.
3. As an outcome from the Summit, the UN member States will agree on an action-oriented outcome document (“Pact for the Future”), which will unite the global community around an international system that is better prepared to manage current and future challenges, for the sake of all humanity and for future generations.
4. The 2024 Regional Forum on Sustainable Development, organised by the UN Economic Commission for Europe in Geneva, Switzerland on 13-14 March 2024 will serve as a platform for further engagement with stakeholders on the Pact for the Future.
5. This process provides an opportunity for the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe to support the role of local and regional authorities in creating an enabling environment that facilitates the localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and thus the delivery of the global agendas for sustainable development.
6. As the Congress highlighted in Recommendation 493 (2023) “Localisation of the Sustainable Development Goals”, local and regional governments play an essential role in achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and thus are indispensable actors for delivering on the Pact for the Future.
7. As an assembly of local and regional authorities representing local governments in all 46 member States of the Council of Europe, the Congress is convinced that the current and future global challenges can only be addressed by harnessing the power of local and regional governments as the level closest to citizens.
8. Taking into account the relevant Council of Europe treaties and conventions and the Reykjavik Declaration adopted during the Council of Europe Summit of Heads of States and Government that took place on 16-17 May 2023, the Congress calls on member States of the Council of Europe to support the role of local and regional authorities in delivering the global agenda for sustainable development, including the Pact for the Future, by:
 - a. with regard to *sustainable development and financing for development*:
 - i. localising the SDGs in line with Congress Recommendation 493 (2023), involving local and regional authorities in the design and implementation of national SDG action plans, encouraging local and regional authorities to conduct voluntary sub-national reviews and integrating the results of such reviews into processes at the national level;
 - ii. encouraging member states to secure policy coherence by identifying critical interdependencies between action areas to pursue a coherent approach to sustainable development implementation;
 - iii. in line with the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122) and relevant Congress recommendations, granting local and regional authorities the necessary freedom for action and decision making, the means and the tools, including own competencies and concomitant financial resources and financial and budgetary autonomy, and the space to voice their views in order to improve the lives of local residents and advance implementation of the 2030 Agenda in their municipalities and regions;

² Draft recommendation approved by the Bureau of the Congress at its meeting of 12 February 2024 (see [abridged report](#)).

- iv. ensuring proper consultation with local and regional governments on national SDG action plans and other policy areas affecting them in accordance with the European Charter of Local Self-Government;
- v. promoting sustainable urbanism in line with the European Urban Charter III;
- vi. promoting full enjoyment of human rights by all citizens by strengthening local democracy, including local and regional authorities' involvement in decision-making on human rights, and promoting participatory democracy at local and regional level in line with the Additional Protocol to the European Charter of Local Self-Government on the right to participate in the affairs of a local authority (CETS No. 207) and with Resolution 493 (2023) "Delivering on the Reykjavik summit: revised Congress priorities, working procedures and structures", which includes the Congress Strategy on Human Rights;

b. with regard to *international peace and security*:

- i. recognising the essential role of local and regional authorities in building democratic, diverse and inclusive communities based on the rule of law and respect for human rights as a major contributing factor for peace and security;
- ii. fostering an inclusive multilevel global governance system for enhanced international cooperation grounded on subsidiarity, decentralisation, solidarity and human rights – one that includes the voices of local and regional governments, ensuring the buy-in of all communities through strategies built from the bottom up;
- iii. emphasising women's full participation in public and political life at all levels as essential to achieving social cohesion, peace and resilience;
- iv. continuing to assist and support the Council of Europe member State Ukraine in its fight against the ongoing illegal full-scale invasion of its sovereign territory by the Russian Federation;
- v. continuing to insist that the Russian Federation cease its war of aggression against Ukraine and withdraw its troops from the sovereign territory of Ukraine immediately, fully, and unconditionally; in this context, the Congress regrets the use by the Russian Federation of its right of veto in the UN Security Council to block the adoption of resolutions that could contribute to ending the war;
- vi. pursuing collaborative efforts with local and regional authorities in providing technical assistance and financial and humanitarian support to Ukraine, and supporting its reconstruction efforts, as a key component of safeguarding international peace and security;
- vii. engaging Ukrainian local and regional authorities in ensuring the optimal use of the Register of Damage Caused by the Aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine aimed at building a comprehensive accountability system for the Russian Federation's war of aggression, and seeking reparations for the damages inflicted in Ukrainian cities and regions;
- viii. commending local and regional authorities in Ukraine for their ongoing commitment to embed the principles of open government and the localisation of human rights into their daily work, even during war time;
- ix. highlighting the importance of building resilience and capacity to act for local authorities to cope effectively with both man-made crises and natural disasters, and strengthening the involvement and capacity for action of local and regional authorities in national and international decision-making processes on climate policies;
- x. supporting ongoing efforts by the Congress to promote grassroots democracy and the localisation of human-rights protection across Council of Europe member States and partner countries and highlight the importance of democracy and human rights in ensuring long-term peace and security.

c. with regard to *science, technology, innovation and digital cooperation*:

- i. highlight the importance of involving local and regional authorities in technology, innovation and digital cooperation policy to promote sustainability, inclusivity, prosperity and human rights;

- ii. encouraging the implementation of smart technologies and artificial intelligence by local and regional authorities to advance democratic participation and inclusivity and improve service provision, while mitigating associated risks and protecting human rights, democratic processes and data privacy and ensuring that no one is left behind;
- iii. taking measures to limit the spread of hate speech and disinformation, particularly where this results in threats to local and regional elected representatives or undermines democratic processes at the grassroots level;

d. with regard to *youth and future generations*:

- i. highlighting the importance of the active, meaningful and inclusive participation of youth in political and public affairs and committing to strengthening meaningful youth engagement in policymaking and decision-making processes at the local, regional national and global levels;
- ii. promoting additional avenues to enhance youth participation in line with the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life;
- iii. undertaking to raise awareness among local and regional authorities of the need to implement local policies to prevent environmental degradation and combat climate change, which is a major concern for young people throughout the world;
- iv. encouraging meaningful engagement of young people in local and regional politics;

e. with regard to *transforming global governance*:

- i. recognising local and regional governments as indispensable actors for delivering on the Pact for the Future and achieving a reinvigorated, effective multilateralism;
- ii. building stronger partnerships with all local actors, including civil society and the private sector, in line with the Revised Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-Making Process;
- iii. amplifying the voices of local and regional authorities in international forums to ensure that their contributions are recognised and taken into account and to promote a genuine multi-level government approach to implementing the Agenda 2030.

9. The Congress will continue its work as part of the Council of Europe, including through its involvement in the work of the Committee of Ministers and other institutional actors, as well as co-operation with member States to promote and support a multi-level approach to addressing global challenges in accordance with the principles of the European Charter of Local Self Governance and to ensuring that citizens always remain at the heart of the action.