

**“FIT FOR THE FUTURE?
HOW EUROPE’S LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS ARE PREPARING”**

FINAL DECLARATION

Adopted by the 24th General Assembly in Malmö, 24 April 2009

We, mayors, leaders, elected representatives and officials from the municipalities, cities, provinces, counties and regions of Europe, meeting in Malmö, Sweden, on 24th April 2009 on the occasion of the 24th General Assembly of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, have agreed the following Declaration:

1. For many years, right up to the present day, Europe has successfully developed common projects and has torn down barriers and walls in the process of constructing a society which is more balanced, fair and based on cooperation and solidarity. In recent years, however, Europe has faced a series of challenges of growing importance and intensity – including demographic change and social diversity, technological developments, climate change and global warming, the need for secure, cleaner energy, and sharper economic competition. Not only must our local and regional governments plan effectively to meet these challenges; they are in fact in the front line in facing them, and have to play a leading role in addressing them, in order to promote a sustainable development.
2. We have reaffirmed, here in Malmö, our commitment to adapt and develop our services to meet these challenges – in both short and longer-term – and to ensure that we are indeed “fit for the future”, working in partnership with the European and national levels of government.
3. However, over the last 6 months, the global financial and economic crisis has hit almost all parts of Europe with great force, and with major consequences for local and regional governments in particular, whose citizens turn to them in times of economic difficulty for shelter and support. This adds a pressing new dimension to the challenges we face, which include the necessary support for territorial policies which promote innovation and research.
4. In June, the elections to the European Parliament take place. These elections mark the great democratic meeting-point between Europe and its citizens. And the coming elections are of particular importance for all of us, within and beyond the European Union.
5. Precisely because this is such a difficult moment in Europe’s economic and social development, we wish to reaffirm some core principles about the direction we want Europe to take – principles which are also set out in CEMR’s Manifesto for Local and Regional Government in view of the coming elections to the Parliament:
6. **A Europe which is strong and united - economically, socially and politically - and which fully recognizes the key role of its local and regional governments**

Europe cannot afford to be divided nor incoherent in today’s hard circumstances; it is essential to reinforce the Union in all its dimensions, and in particular to confront the economic and social crisis. It is clear to all: the juxtaposition of national economic stimulus plans, without coordination, has demonstrated the limits of a solely intergovernmental approach. **We need a strong, effective and democratic governance:** a European Council which is fully committed, a

Commission which puts forward proposals and takes action, and a Parliament which assumes its full responsibilities. All institutions must play their full and active role in meeting the challenges we face, in a spirit of partnership with all levels of governance.

7. A Europe which refuses to turn in on itself and which rejects protectionism

Given the depth and expected duration of the economic crisis, we need to guard against the risk that individual governments look to protect their own citizens no matter what the cost to others; and likewise to ensure that Europe does not turn its back on the rest of the world. Such policies, if implemented, would cause far greater political, economic and social damage. Twenty years after the fall of the Iron Curtain, Europe must refuse to allow new barriers to be built within our continent, or against the EU's neighbours and those beyond.

8. A Europe of tolerance and respect, open and responsive to the world

We need to oppose, with even greater vigour, all forms of intolerance, racism, xenophobia and aggressive nationalism. This is a fundamental duty of all of Europe's democratic bodies, from European Parliament to local commune.

Moreover, increased inward migration in recent decades has brought changes to the demographic, social and ethnic profile of our cities and localities; this process can bring many benefits but can also pose challenges to us, in particular to achieve successful integration. We therefore need effective policies at all levels in relation to migration; these policies must also target illegal immigration which can give rise to negative social consequences.

Europe must also demonstrate these qualities of tolerance, respect, openness and commitment to the principle of gender equality in the international domain – to promote peace and intercultural dialogue, to resolve conflicts, to tackle poverty and to implement the Millennium Development Goals. We believe that these aims can be fostered through strengthened international cooperation and twinning between European cities and those in developing countries, notably in Africa, and through the full commitment of states to the necessary public aid for development. To these ends, we support the valuable work of our world organisation, United Cities and Local Governments, and also of the Alliance of Civilisations.

9. A Europe with a strong social dimension

The current crisis has once again underlined the need to balance the working of market forces with a robust framework of social solidarity and protection. Whilst each country has its own means for providing social welfare and social services, we reaffirm our attachment to the European model of society which must continue to provide support for those who lose out or suffer exclusion or discrimination.

And Europe's local and regional authorities are, and must remain, at the heart of this model and its continent-wide web of social protection.

10. A Europe close to its local and regional roots, and to its local and regional elected representatives

The history of Europe is also a history of its towns and cities, its regions and nations. Therefore, a centralised, top-down Europe can never succeed in winning the support of its citizens.

We emphasize that most European policies require the active engagement of local and regional governments, from inception to implementation, in order to achieve the best results. The European institutions and the national governments should therefore recognise and respect this

contribution, and ensure that local and regional authorities have the necessary financial means and capacity.

We underline in this regard the importance of the work of the Council of Europe, in particular the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities and of the Charter of local self-government, which enshrines the principles of Europe close to its local roots. We likewise recall the value of CEMR's cooperation with the Committee of the Regions, which we hope to enhance, on a basis of partnership, in support of our common goals.

We welcome the recognition by the EU's Heads of Government, in the 2007 Berlin Declaration, that in today's Europe "tasks are shared between the European Union, the Member States and their regions and local authorities." And we reaffirm our support for the Treaty of Lisbon, which would for the first time, in the European Treaties, give proper recognition to the role of democratic local and regional government, and which would therefore have a real practical impact on the lives of our citizens.

11. A democratic Europe, which involves and engages its citizens.

The year 2009 marks the 20th anniversary of the European Parliament's decision to create a programme of financial support to town twinning. This has proved of great importance in enabling citizens from across our continent to meet and understand each other better, not least during the phases of EU enlargement. We believe that twinings with the countries of south-east Europe can play an important role at this time.

12. We recognize that, as Europe develops and changes, we need to develop new ways of bringing citizens together, and to modernise the image and reality of twinning. We need to involve more sections of the population in twinning exchanges. We are convinced that the EU needs to strengthen and streamline its work on and financing for active citizenship, and twinning for the future.

13. 2009 also, of course, marks the 20th anniversary of the final victory of the Solidarity movement and free elections in Poland, changes in other central European countries, crowned with the fall of the Berlin Wall, which quickly led to the reunification of Europe, and to the flowering of democracy at local and regional levels across the countries of central and eastern Europe. CEMR's key themes, for over 50 years, have included support for local and regional self-government and democracy, and for town twinning. These are two sides of the same coin – a democratic Europe which has its roots in its municipalities, and which involves its citizens in all aspects of its life.

14. But a Europe which is based on democracy at all levels must above all have its own strong democratic voice and institution. Therefore, all of us from EU member states have the responsibility to encourage our citizens to vote in the elections to the European Parliament in June, and to explain the key issues at stake. We call on our colleagues, across the Union, to join us in this fulfilling this mission.

* * * * *

Malmö, 24th April 2009

RESOLUTION

EUROPE'S LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS – PREPARING FOR THE FUTURE

We, mayors, leaders, elected representatives and officials from the municipalities, cities, provinces, counties and regions of Europe, meeting in Malmö, Sweden, on 24th April 2009 on the occasion of the 24th General Assembly of the Council of European Municipalities and Regions, have agreed the following Resolution:

RESPONDING TO THE ECONOMIC CRISIS

1. In times of trouble, citizens turn first to their local or regional governments for help. Yet it is also at this time of recession - when we are under pressure to spend more on social welfare and services for those in need – that our financial resources are most affected, by reductions in tax income, financial transfers, and other sources of revenue.
2. We take note of the steps taken at international level (through the G20), at European level, and in most States, to stabilize the financial system and to promote economic recovery in these difficult times. Membership of the eurozone, we underline, has been of positive benefit for those countries of the zone which have experienced special difficulties. We are convinced that stronger and appropriate regulation of financial institutions which can pose a systemic risk is required for the future.
3. We believe that local and regional governments are uniquely well placed to play a key role in the implementation of economic stimulus and recovery programmes, and that our investments are more likely to be successful more speedily than those made at other levels. However, some national governments have not taken into account the need to involve and work with their local and regional authorities, a situation which it is urgent to redress.
4. We therefore call on the European institutions, the European Council, and the national governments, to channel a much greater amount of investment under current and future economic recovery programmes through local and regional governments. These programmes should be geared in the short term towards investments that can be swiftly implemented, and which help to meet longer-term European goals, such as energy efficiency and enhanced competitiveness. Recovery programmes should also support small and medium-sized enterprises, which are essential components of the European economy. We owe it to future generations to see that these investments are economically, environmentally and socially innovative, sustainable and future-oriented.
5. We ask the European institutions and States to provide greater flexibility to ensure that the State Aid rules and Structural Funds can be used more simply and creatively at this time (e.g. increasing the EU co-financing share). More flexible public procurement procedures should be permitted, as proposed by the European Commission, without however calling into question transparency or fairness.
6. We appreciate the role of the European Investment Bank in taking forward measures for recovery, working with local and regional authorities, and emphasize the need for such programmes to be extended.

7. We also call on the national governments to involve their local and regional governments as partners in tackling the crisis, and are empowered – financially and in other appropriate ways – to carry out their responsibilities for social protection and assistance to the victims of the crisis. In particular, the financial base and the resources of local and regional governments must be protected. We note that several states have found means to compensate their local governments for the increased expenditure necessary to meet the growing needs of their citizens, and encourage other governments to follow these good practices.
8. In conclusion, we believe that the potential contribution of local and regional government in combating the economic crisis has not yet been fully understood or utilized by the European Union, or by most European states. We propose the concept of a “local and regional New Deal” and demand that the current crisis should be used to achieve a better balance between economic, environmental and social policies..

RESPONDING TO CLIMATE CHANGE

9. It is now clear that climate change is occurring at an even faster rate than estimated by the international scientific community only a few years ago. The world therefore faces one of its greatest challenges in 2009 – can the international community reach a global agreement at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December of sufficient scale, with committed universal support, to protect the earth from the severest consequences of climate change, and to help those affected?
10. The European Union must continue to play a leadership role, with the backing of all levels of government. Local and regional governments across Europe – and the world – have been in the forefront on climate change and are a vital link between international, European and national commitments and individual action. We are uniquely placed to take action on both climate change mitigation and adaptation through our services, and by providing leadership to the communities we serve.. We need to do more to share our experiences and good practice, with partners in Europe and elsewhere in the world, including in developing countries.
11. To these ends, we support the Local Government Climate Change Leadership Summit (Copenhagen, 2-4 June) which will provide an important meeting-place for our international movement of cities and local governments in the lead-up to the intergovernmental UN Conference.

In this regard, we support the work that our world organisation, UCLG, is developing with all the local government partners to provide a united political voice for local and regional authorities in the ongoing international negotiations. We encourage CEMR’s members to promote the Mayors Local Government Climate Protection Agreement to strengthen the position of cities and regions before the international community.

12. We hope and expect that the intergovernmental Conference in Copenhagen in December will reach a binding agreement which includes ambitious targets and commitments for all states for action to reduce the extent of future global warming and climate change. These should include targets by sector (power generation, water management, transport etc.) and an effective monitoring mechanism which ensures compliance.

13. In particular we want this new post-Kyoto international agreement to recognize the role of local and regional governments as key partners in tackling climate change, and call on the European Union, international organisations and the EU and UN Member States to support this. We recall that Agenda 21 (agreed at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992) affirmed that “the participation and cooperation of local authorities will be a determining factor” in fulfilling its objectives.

We express the hope that local and regional governments will sign the Istanbul Water Consensus, a document which underlines their role and responsibility in relation to the management of water and sanitation.

14. Local and regional governments also have a key role to play in relation to energy. We are substantial users, purchasers and in some cases producers of energy; we can influence future use through planning and other policies, and we can advise and encourage our citizens on energy issues. The decisions and policies adopted on energy by local and regional governments are fundamental also to the issues of climate protection and energy security.
15. We reaffirm our commitment to help to meet the EU’s energy targets - reducing CO2 emissions, improving energy efficiency, increasing the share of renewables by 20% by 2020, and reducing emissions by 30% following an international agreement. We also express our support for initiatives such as the Covenant of Mayors which aim to go beyond these targets.
16. In short, public authorities – including local and regional governments – need to lead by example and take courageous steps to help to develop a low-carbon economy and society. Such policies need the active participation and commitment of local people and the private sector.

RESPONDING TO DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGE AND THE CHALLENGE OF IMPROVING QUALITY

17. Almost every European country faces major demographic change over the next half century. Most will have an increasing number and proportion of elderly people, for whom we must provide an increasing volume and range of health and social services, probably without commensurate increases in income. In some countries, a decline in overall population is foreseen, whilst in others, a growth in population is projected which is in part due to recent inward migration. All of these will lead to changes in the needs and demands for services which local and regional governments provide, therefore requiring effective policies for inclusion.
18. We therefore recognize the need to be proactive in adapting our services and our employment structures to meet the changing demographic profile of our societies. Our managers and employees will need to learn new skills, and to offer new forms of service provision. Our workforces will need to reflect the diversity of our local populations. We underline the importance of an effective local social dialogue between employers and the trade union representatives of our employees, to prepare for and adapt to the changes we face.
19. The need to enhance the quality of our services is not limited to issues of demographic change. It is at the heart of our mission as local and regional governments. The steps we need to take include: modernisation of structures to ensure that they are fit for the future; using Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) to enhance efficiency and effectiveness; investing in staff development at all levels; as well as learning through bench-marking, self-assessments, peer reviews etc.
20. We emphasize the important role that national associations can play in organising and promoting these activities. We reaffirm that issues of quality and evaluation are the responsibility of local and regional governments themselves (who are accountable to their electors), and oppose steps at national or European level to impose mandatory performance requirements.

RESPONDING TO STRUCTURAL CHANGE IN LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

21. We note that in a number of countries, important changes in local or regional government have recently been, or are likely to be, implemented. These include mergers between local authorities to enhance their efficiency and effectiveness, or the removal of a level of sub-national government, or the creation of a new regional level of government.
22. We are particularly concerned to ensure that, in the course of any changes, citizens are involved and the financial position of local and regional authorities is protected. When municipalities are merged, when new competences are transferred to the local or regional level, or when changes are made to the local taxation system, there is a risk that the commensurate resources are not made available. We strongly urge all European states to fulfil their obligations under Article 9 of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (financial provisions).

RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE OF GENDER EQUALITY

23. We reaffirm our commitment to gender equality in all areas of life, with a special reference to the need to achieve a balanced representation of women and men in the political structures of every country, in particular – from our perspective – of those elected to our local and regional governments. We welcome the success of the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, launched at our last General Assembly in Innsbruck, and now signed by almost 900 local and regional authorities. We encourage all local and regional authorities to consider signing this Charter, and welcome proposals for an effective follow-up to help signatory authorities to implement the provisions of the Charter.
24. We call on the EU institutions, for the coming mandate, to take positive steps to promote gender equality with vigour, and in particular to pay more attention to the need to promote equality at local and regional levels. We believe that the European Commission and Parliament should work effectively with CEMR to this end, in support of our Charter's objectives.

RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGE OF TERRITORIAL COHESION

25. We welcome the new focus on the concept of "territorial cohesion", i.e. the integrated (economic, social, and environmental) development of a region, city or municipality – for it is in each of our territories that the combination of local, regional, national and European policies have to be made to work for the benefit of our populations.
26. The debate will soon start on the future of the European Union's financial framework for the post-2013 period, and in particular the future of the cohesion policy. For our part, we reaffirm our commitment to an ambitious, well-resourced European cohesion policy. Such a policy – whilst continuing to give a special support to regions whose development is "lagging" – should be open to all of Europe's regions and local authorities, helping to foster their sustainable development and harness their economic and social potential. We consider that the rules on cohesion funding need to be less prescriptive and better aligned with regional and local development strategies.
27. We consider that, at European level, urban and rural policy and funding need to be better co-ordinated and integrated; the current division of responsibility within the European Commission does not lead to the best results. The urban and rural economies are often closely inter-connected and should be viewed together in a holistic way. Moreover, the Commission's rural development policy needs to take a broader view of economic development than is the case today.

RESPONDING TO THE INTERNATIONAL CHALLENGES

28. It is in all of our interests for the European Union to have a good partnership with all of its neighbouring countries. We believe that Europe's local and regional governments – from all European states, whether EU members or not – can and should play a more important role in the EU Neighbourhood Policy, through twinnings, partnerships and joint activities.
29. We encourage CEMR to continue its work with the associations of the countries of the Western Balkans, and to strengthen the partnership with NALAS, in particular to assist at local level with preparations for future EU accession.
30. We also hope that, together with UCLG and its Mediterranean Commission, closer relations can be developed with the local and regional authorities of the eastern and southern banks of the Mediterranean, and beyond. We welcome steps taken to strengthen the Euro-Mediterranean partnership at local and regional levels.
31. We recall the steps that CEMR and UCLG have made to promote understanding between the local authorities of Israel and Palestine, and are committed to continue our efforts, working with their national associations for a peaceful and equitable resolution of the conflict, based on two viable democratic states. We thank the Municipal Alliance for Peace, the Standing Committee for the Euro Mediterranean Partnership of Local and Regional Authorities and the European Network of Local Authorities for Peace in the Middle East for their continuing work.
32. We reaffirm our strong commitment to the role of local governments in international development co-operation. Local authorities have an important role to play in partnership in helping to implement the Millennium Development Goals, to strengthen effective processes of decentralisation and democratisation, and generally to support local economic and institutional development in low income countries.
33. We are pleased that the European Commission and Parliament have recognized this important role, in particular through the creation of a specific programme, Non-State Actors and Local Authorities. We are also pleased to note the new European Charter on development cooperation in support of local governance. We warmly welcome the creation of the new European Platform of local and regional authorities for development, and look forward, to an improved co-ordination of the local and regional voice towards the European Commission and Parliament in this domain.
34. Finally, we underline the important role of our world organisation, United Cities and Local Governments, for peace, development and democracy, and express our willingness to work closely with UCLG, as European section, to promote our common values in the international domain.

* * * * *