



**DECLARATION ON SOLIDARITY WITH MUNICIPALITIES AND
REGIONS OF COUNTRIES HARD-HIT BY THE FINANCIAL CRISIS**

- **BY CEMR'S EXECUTIVE BUREAU, MEETING IN COPENHAGEN, MARCH 2012 -**

Noting that the impacts of the global financial and economic crisis put an extraordinary strain on a number of European countries, their regions, cities and towns, and their citizens, and threatens our common European project, by dividing, again in history, our continent and our peoples;

Recalling the European Charter of Local Self-Government, in this time of difficulty, we must remain vigilant that its principles are respected, that tendencies toward centralisation be resisted, as this is by no means a response; we underline that in times of crisis, it is necessary to ensure the confidence of the citizens. Local democracy and financial autonomy of local and regional authorities must be guaranteed to be able to successfully move beyond the current crisis;

Recalling that unity, co-operation and friendship among Europe's peoples is one of the founding values of CEMR and that our local and regional authorities have the tools and the capacity to work together across borders, raising mutual awareness and close links between our peoples;

Wishing to express our solidarity with the peoples in particularly hard-hit countries, for example today, the people of Greece, who face unprecedented economic hardship and austerity measures;

We hereby invite the local and regional authorities of Europe:

- To demonstrate the solidarity by strengthening or establishing specific partnerships and town-twinning links with local and regional authorities of hard-hit countries, using this tool to promote dialogue, common understanding and co-operation throughout the European Union;
- To promote a greater empowerment of the citizens, whose initiatives can themselves greatly help communities face the negative effects of financial crisis;
- Regarding the particular situation today in Greece and other countries particularly hit by the financial crisis, and acknowledging the importance of tourism for their economies, to support these through specific actions (presentation in fairs, promotion of products and destinations) and via their local media; to develop concrete projects and initiatives with their municipalities, supporting sustainable and diversified local economic development, exchanging good practices, promoting links between citizens, on equal opportunities and inclusion, employment, volunteering and community involvement.

CEMR hereby calls on the European Union to express a clear and strong support for such projects, recognising local and regional authorities' particular role in helping to overcome the crisis and bridge the gaps which have opened up in the ongoing difficult context, by thus bringing peoples together, and restoring confidence in what Europe can achieve.

- We call on the European Commission and member States to introduce greater flexibility in the rules governing the use and distribution of structural funds for countries whose economies are particularly suffering, for example reducing co-financing requirements for projects useful for local development, thus enabling local and regional authorities to as rapidly as possible provide responses to their citizens' needs.