



Brussels, 16th March 2009

Reaction to the Communication on “Towards a comprehensive climate change agreement in Copenhagen”

Dear President/ Prime Minister,

The European Council meeting on 19-20 March in Brussels will take a position on key elements of the global post-2012 climate agreement. On this basis, the EU will negotiate a comprehensive agreement with other countries, organising the worldwide cooperation to fight against climate change and adapt to its effects.

As European organisations representing local and regional authorities throughout Europe, we regret that the important role of local and regional governments in the fight against climate change was completely absent from the Communication that the European Commission published on 28 January 2009 entitled “Towards a comprehensive climate change agreement in Copenhagen”, and from the conclusions of the Environment Council of 2 March and the resolution of the European Parliament adopted on 11 March 2009.

The current financial and economic crisis should not undermine the fight against climate change. Instead, it should be but one of the multitude of arguments for paving the way towards a low-carbon economy. Local and regional authorities are an essential part of the process and are best placed to offer solutions based on local knowledge and expertise and proximity to the citizens. We encourage national governments to develop mechanisms for climate change cooperation with local and regional authorities. A truly comprehensive climate change agreement must mention local and regional authorities as indispensable actors, if we are to achieve the objectives that will be set in Copenhagen in December 2009. The fact that after only a few months almost 500 European municipalities have signed the Covenant of Mayors is a clear sign of their commitment to play their role.

United Nations already recognised the vital role of local authorities in achieving sustainable development since the Earth Summit in 1992 leading to the adoption of Agenda 21 and dynamic implementation by cities and municipalities.

Also, mirroring the current United Nations Bali Action plan as adopted in Bali in 2007, local and regional governments and their associations have embarked on a Local Government Climate Roadmap “Bali-Poznan-Copenhagen”. Through this process, local authorities seek that nations adopt a comprehensive climate agreement and offer local experiences to make its implementation possible. With this objective local authorities have presented during the COP14 High Level Segment a proposal for a COP decision on “Cities, Local Authorities and Climate Change”. Through the adoption of such a Decision, nations would recognise the important role of local and regional governments in the implementation of national climate strategies. Today, as part of the Local Government Climate Roadmap, local and regional governments around the globe are being mobilised to encourage national governments to recognise their role in climate protection.

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At European level, the role of local and regional authorities in climate mitigation and adaptation policies was recently recognised in the draft Directive on the Promotion of the Use of Energy from Renewable Sources adopted by the Council of Ministers and European Parliament in December 2008 (as a part of the Energy and Climate package), as well as in the European Parliament's recommendations for the EU's Future Integrated Policy on Climate Change adopted in February 2009.

We therefore ask you to integrate a reference to the important role of local and regional authorities in the Spring Council Conclusions and in the final EU position for the new international agreement to be agreed in Copenhagen. This would be an essential step towards recognising that active cooperation between all levels of government is needed to meet the climate challenge and an important signal to our local and regional politicians that their role and commitment is taken seriously.

Please find in attachment the proposal for a COP Decision our organisations presented at the last COP meeting in Poznan, in December 2008. The views and requests expressed in this document are still valid for the next COP meeting in Copenhagen.

We look forward to collaborating with you in this crucial issue.

Yours sincerely,



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