THE CÁDIZ DECLARATION:

“Decentralisation, Development, Democracy,
Innovating for a Europe in 3D”

Cádiz, 28th September 2012

We, mayors, leaders, elected members and representatives of European local governments, cities, intermediate authorities and regions, gathered in Cádiz in Spain this 28th September 2012 on the occasion of the 25th General Assembly of European Municipalities and Regions,

United by the commitment to the fundamental principles of democracy and of local and regional autonomy;

Convinced that good governance in Europe requires now a constructive and active partnership between all levels of governance – European, national, regional and local – together with civil society and social and economic actors, with a decentralised vision of European society;

Aware that the European project is currently put into question by the major problems that our different countries are experiencing; we observe, and regret, that the citizens are turning away from, and even rejecting, the common Europe;

Determined to take action for the innovative and sustainable development of our territories;

Underlining our commitment to a Europe which stands politically and economically strong, united, true to its values and principles, in solidarity, equipped with effective institutions, active and respected on the international stage and respectful of its diversity. These are the preconditions for a Europe that is truly able to respond to its citizens’ needs and the global challenges of the 21st century;

Declare as follows:

Europe must implement common policies if it is going to succeed in overcoming the current challenges and in defending its economic stability and social cohesion; our future depends on the successful management of these challenges.

This all-encompassing crisis – economic, social and moral – which Europe is experiencing, marked by numerous Summits during which the European Union gives off an impression of hesitation and inability to respond to the expectations of Europeans, has deepened the divide between Europe and the citizens. The risk of division in Europe is growing; it can be seen in some public opinion, which is expressed in the worrying advancement of nationalist and inward-looking sentiments.

In this context, CEMR will continue to promote a meaningful Europe, as the original founding fathers intended: a Europe based in the values of democracy, unity and solidarity. This demands the full respect of the principle of subsidiarity, with empowered local and regional governments, more than ever, actors for change. As the closest institutions to the citizens, local and regional governments have a major role to play responding to their expectations and concerns.
We propose a new approach to development that relies on European territories able to create the conditions for new growth – growth that is more sustainable and able to create jobs.

“Europe in 3D” means, first, the emergence of a Europe that believes that collaboration among political, economic and social actors is the key to recovery. Decentralisation, Democracy and Development are the three dimensions on which a renewed and strengthened common voice of the entire EU must be expressed.

D for Decentralisation:

The financial and economic crisis is severely affecting many of our territories in Europe, with major consequences for local and regional governments towards which the citizens turn for protection and support. It is also often towards the local and regional authorities that states and European institutions turn in order to manage the challenges, seeking to take action engaging fewer of their own means. Here, in Cádiz, we reaffirm our commitment to take action for the development of our territories with an innovative approach and to work in partnership with the other levels of European and national governance in respect of the principle of subsidiarity. It is essential to develop policies to strengthen the capacities and empowerment of local and regional governments. In this context, we call for the proper recognition of local and regional self-government in national law and European regulations; in particular we demand the freedom for local and regional authorities to organise and plan the delivery of their Services of General Interest. We are seeing, however, that all over Europe, states are tempted to move in the opposite direction, passing on their own problems to the local authorities, by centralising certain public policies or transferring new responsibilities without providing the local and regional actors the means for effective action. Such trends run contrary to our founding objective and concept for Europe.

We promote this decentralised vision of society at the global level together with our world organisation, United Cities and Local Governments. Indeed, we are convinced that democracy is best ensured through citizens’ participation in the decisions that concern them most directly.

The Arab Spring has clearly shown the peoples’ basic belief in, and wish for, democracy and development: here as well, decentralisation is a major factor. In Europe, as in our neighbouring countries south of the Mediterranean, the path toward greater democracy – demanded by the people – is through a governance which ensures the participation of citizens in the decisions affecting them directly, in their communities, towns, cities or regions.

Europe has a historic responsibility: we must achieve our own successful evolution, set the example and offer the people of the world the support they need for more economic, social and political development.

In 2013, we will celebrate the 60th anniversary of the European Charter of Municipal Liberties, which was adopted by the Council of European Municipalities and Regions in 1953 in Versailles. We would like to highlight the importance of the Council of Europe’s work in this context, and in particular the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities, through the promotion of the European Charter of Local Self-Government, which lays down the principles of a Europe respectful of its territories and their rights. We further recall the role of the Committee of the Regions, the European Union’s institution of local and regional government, whose action is complementary to the work of the CEMR and other associations, and with which we will seek to continue to cooperate for the achievement of our common objectives.

D for Development:

Preparing for the future is a necessity for all economic and political leaders. We call for concerted action in partnership for the implementation of territorial policies which promote innovation and research.

Over the past 60 years, after almost a century of brutal conflicts, wars and massacres, Europe has carried forward its project for peace: the creation of a common Europe with a society that is prosperous, more fair and inclusive, and based on cooperation and solidarity. Today, however, Europe is facing a series of increasingly significant and intense crises – crises which shake the confidence of the citizens in their governments and in our common Europe. These crises demand innovative solutions to the challenges of unemployment, particularly among young people, to demographic change, social diversity, evolutions in technology and communication, climate change, mobility, the increasing demand for safe and clean energy...
We are convinced that local and regional development, driven by the mobilisation of all local and regional actors, in coherence with the citizens’ needs, can help Europe overcome the crisis.

The current crisis underlines, once again, the need to design a development model that ensures our common Europe. We reaffirm our commitment to a comprehensive European model to continue to support the citizens in need, to those suffering from exclusion or discrimination. Local and regional governments are at the heart of this model and have developed a social safety net across the continent.

We must also ensure that Europe does not turn its back to the world. Turning in on itself is not a solution or a way of protection: on the contrary, history has shown that this leads to regression and conflict. We are convinced that Europe can and must lead the way toward a more human approach, to ensure that all citizens in Europe and the world can benefit from a sustainable model of development.

Moreover, the response to climate and environmental concerns offer an important opportunity for economic development and employment. Local and regional authorities are already active in the concrete implementation of policies for sustainable development.

European cities and regions are actively involved in promoting peace and intercultural dialogue, in eradicating poverty and achieving the Millennium Development Goals. We believe that these goals can be achieved through international cooperation policies and direct partnerships between European municipalities and those of developing countries, such as Africa and Latin America. The full commitment of States and the European Union in the official development assistance remains a crucial factor.

D for Democracy:

EUROPE has reached a turning point: the financial crisis is also a political crisis, which must lead Europe as a whole to rethink how to pursue its aim of guaranteeing a prosperous and sustainable life for all Europeans. We hereby recall those fundamental principles which we consider essential for the future of our common Europe; Europe cannot afford to be divided or lacking coherence under the difficult current circumstances. It is crucial that the links which unify all European peoples be strengthened. An intergovernmental approach alone cannot suffice. CEMR reaffirms its commitment to a stronger Europe of greater solidarity, for the construction of an ever stronger political union between Europeans, as the only solution to respond to the issues we face today. This demands a greater political integration of the European Union, inextricably linked with solidarity and implying a mutualisation of elements of national sovereignty. We call for strong, efficient and democratic governance within the European Union: a committed European Council; a Commission that brings proposals and takes action; a European central bank which is independent and free to take measures according to its mandate to ensure monetary stability to support future European growth; and a European Parliament, with full legislative powers, drawing respect and strength from universal suffrage, which is able to fully assume its responsibilities. The institutions must fully and actively play their part and respond to the challenges we are facing, in a spirit of partnership with all levels of governance and in particular with local and regional governments.

Increasingly, the citizens are regarding the crisis as a failure of European policies. This view is far too often reinforced by politicians themselves, who find therein an excuse to cover their own inadequacies.

Local and regional authorities are the closest democratic link between the Institutions and the citizens.

CEMR, like the rest of European democratic structures – from the Parliament to the local community – is resolutely opposed to any form of intolerance, racism and xenophobia. We advocate that all institutions take an active role in defending human rights, democracy and freedom in the world, as well as the protection of minorities who are persecuted for reasons of religion or opinion. And, particularly, we hope that the Council of Europe, whose defense of human rights is essential, will continue transmitting the message of a democratic Europe, exemplary in terms of tolerance, respect and commitment to the equality of all.

Recalling that there can be no democracy without equality of women and men, European municipalities and regions are equipped with the tools necessary for concrete action on the ground for ensuring equality: the European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in Local Life, signed by some 1500 local and regional governments from across Europe, and the European Observatory for equality which accompanies the
signatories in the drawing up and implementation of their action plans. This work must be supported and encouraged by the European Union.

In our constantly evolving Europe, we must continue to develop new forms of exchange, pursuing the modernisation of town twinning and ensuring the participation of the greatest number of citizens possible. The European Union must strengthen and improve the effectiveness of its actions in the field of active citizenship and town twinning for the future. Of course, the financing of its activities must develop accordingly. 2013, the European Year of Citizens, should be a starting point for an ambitious policy for the participation of citizens in the definition of our common Europe.

Europe is a work in progress, and must remain open to those who wish to join and fulfil the conditions necessary to membership in the European Union, and which share the political aims and values of the European Union. This is particularly pertinent for the countries of south-east Europe. The preparation of accession of future member states must be accompanied by strong support for local authorities and their representative associations so as to empower these as they assume their roles as key actors of European Integration.

We call on all of Europe’s local and regional authorities to promote this declaration toward their citizens.